The New Criterion

November 2003

A monthly review *edited by Hilton Kramer*

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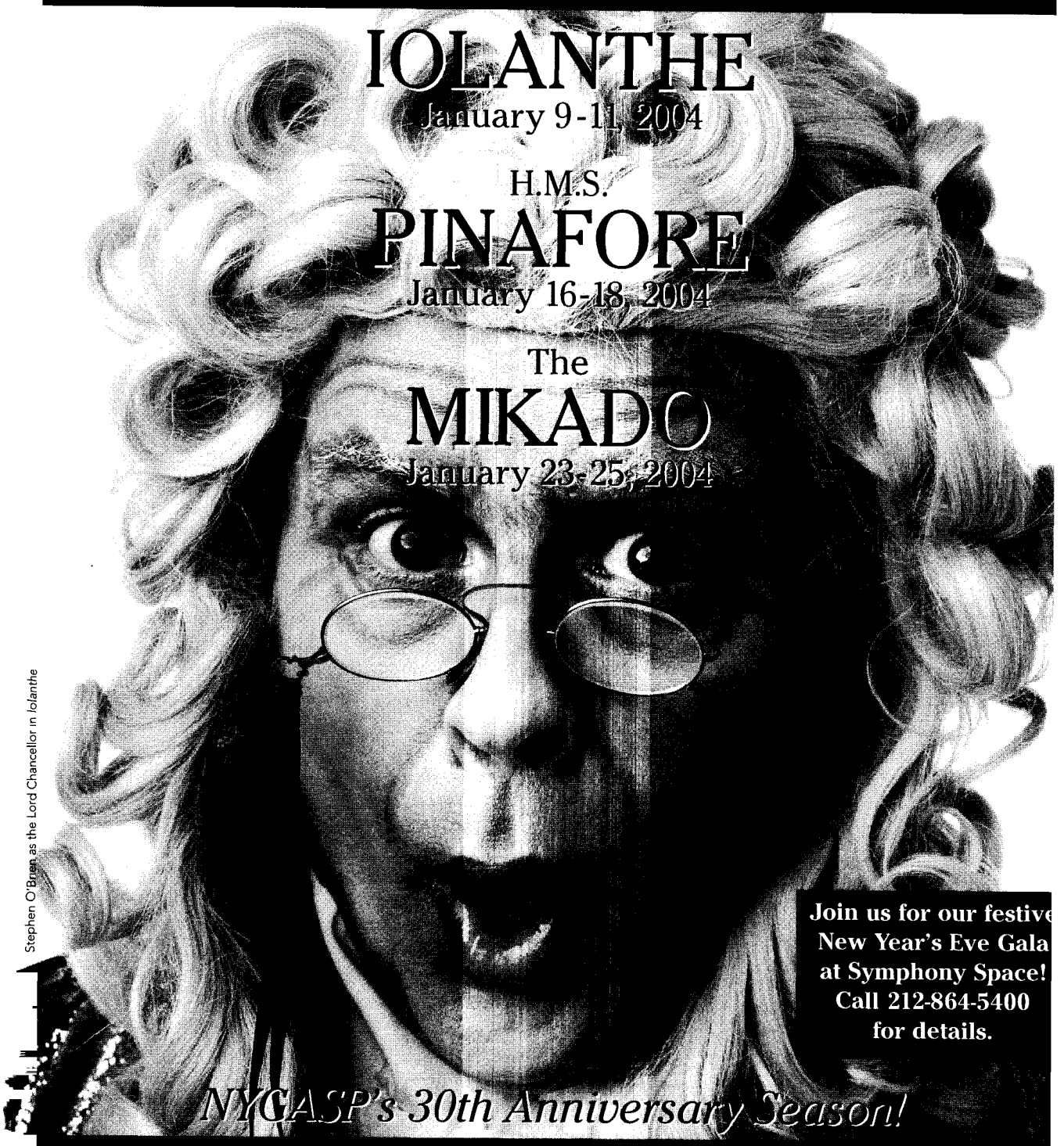

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The New Criterion *November 2003*

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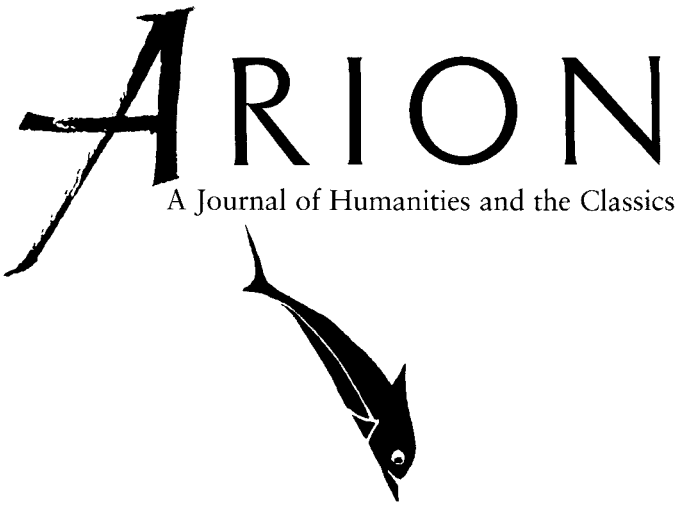

The grand sequence of the classical tradition, which extends in various strands through the Middle Ages and Renaissance to the scientific Enlightenment and modern era, is actually a master paradigm for how to structure an authentically multicultural curriculum on a global scale. All students abroad as well as in the US need to learn the general contours of the world's major artistic and cultural traditions. These long channels of lineage can best be understood as streams—mighty rivers that are fed by tributaries and that are a confluence of mixed and varied material . . .

Camille Paglia, "The Mighty River of Classics"
Arion Volume IX, Number 2.

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Notes & Comments: November 2003

"The power of self-criticism"

Among the many instructive and edifying passages in the Book of Common Prayer is a section describing "The Consecrating of Bishops." It is a stirring ritual, solemn, confident, uplifting. Of course, not just anybody is qualified to be a Bishop—entrusted with the care of souls and the care of those who care for souls—and so the candidate engages in a sort of antiphony to witness publicly his fitness for high pastoral office.

> Are you ready, with all faithful diligence, to banish and drive away from the Church all erroneous and strange doctrine contrary to God's Word; and both privately and openly to call upon and encourage others to the same?

To which the candidate replies "I am ready, the Lord being my helper."

And so on.

We thought of this and kindred passages from that august ceremony when contemplating the current travails of the Church of England and Dr. Rowan Williams, who was elected Archbishop of Canterbury in July 2002. Assiduous readers of *The New Criterion* may remember Dr. Williams in his previous capacity as Archbishop of Wales. Back in 2000, as John Gross reported in our pages for June of that year, Dr. Williams delivered a speech exalting the cartoon characters Homer and Marge Simpson as admirable exceptions to the entertainment industry's usual unromantic treatment of the institution of marriage.

We mention Dr. Williams's high opinion of the Simpsons in order to suggest the cultural and moral weather in which England's chief primate travels. As the Church of England agonizes over—well, over everything: the issue of homosexual bishops, its relations with the Anglican communion in North America, its very future as anything more than a politically correct antiquarian curiosity—it is useful to have the image of Homer and Marge Simpson before us. It helps one "place" the current Archbishop of Canterbury.

Consider, for example, Dr. Williams's recent admonition that America recognize that terrorists, too, can "have serious moral goals." Not that he, Dr. Rowan Williams, advocates, condones, or otherwise give countenance to the actions of terrorists. Heavens, no! Dr. Williams is frank in admitting that he does not like what terrorists *do*. But even terrorists, Dr. Williams counsels, are people. And although they express themselves in ways we find, er, distasteful —Dr. Williams even allowed himself the

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daring word "wicked"—still, it is possible that, in their own way, terrorists are pursuing "an aim that is shared by those who would not dream of acting in the same way, an aim that is intelligible or desirable." Got that? Terrorists may be misguided, poor chaps, but even terrorists, although they have an unfortunate propensity for incinerating thousands of innocent men, women, and children—despite all that, even terrorists dream of a better world.

The same, of course, could be said of Stalin, Hitler, Pol Pot, and other proponents of unorthodox routes to utopia. Each in his own way believed he was working to make the world a better place. If that happened to involve the extermination of the bourgeoisie, the Jews, or anyone who had glasses and could read—well, you cannot make an omelette without etc., etc.

Really, though, Dr. Williams is only incidentally interested in terrorists. The real focus of his censure, naturally, was that ominous bastion of evil, the United States. The problem—one problem—is that America has not been sufficiently sensitive in its response to al Qaeda. Many policy makers in America have failed to appreciate the "serious moral goals" of Mohammed Atta and his pals. (Come to that, many ordinary citizens have also failed on that score.) Not, again, that Dr. Williams *approves* of young men slitting the throats of airline pilots and steering airliners into densely populated buildings. No, no. Dr. Williams is against violence. Back before the war with Iraq even began, he warned that the conflict would be "immoral and illegal." Similarly, Dr. Williams argues that in its indelicate response to al Qaeda, America "loses the power of self-criticism and becomes trapped in a self-referential morality."

Eh what? "Self-criticism"? "Trapped in a self-referential morality"? As Dr. Williams might recall, the book of Ecclesiastes reminds us that "to everything there is a season." A time for hand-wringing self-criticism, and a time for deliberate action: "a time to kill," as the Good Book says, "and a time to heal." When a gang of Islamist fanatics commandeer several airliners and proceed to murder 3000 people and destroy a couple billion dollars worth of real-estate, you don't ring up your local group therapy leader.

If you're smart, you don't ring up the United Nations, either, though that is precisely what Dr. Williams wants us to do. (Talk about "erroneous and strange doctrine contrary to God's Word.") Dr. Williams delivered his remarks at the Royal Institute for International Affairs, where, according to the London *Daily Telegraph*, which reported on the event, he said he wished to challenge the habit of using violence "as the tool of private interest or private redress." We'll sign on to that, good Reverend Doctor. But what about the use of violence as a legitimate means of *public* redress? Dr. Williams engages in some fancy definitional footwork here. "If," he says, "a state or administration acts without due and visible attention to agreed international process, it acts in a way analogous to a private person. It purports to be the judge of its own interest." Imagine that! A sovereign nation actually purporting to "judge of its own interest"! The alternative? Why, letting the United Nations judge for us. What a splendid idea *that* would be.

Dr. Williams allowed that there are "weaknesses" in international legal institutions that render them ineffective in dealing with many many international outrages. In fact, the weakness of international legal institutions is a blessing for anyone who cherishes his personal liberty and his country's sovereignty, but Dr. Williams naturally calls for "reforms" at the UN and "a new panel of experts" to advise us about when military intervention might be appropriate.

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As we write, the thug-state of Libya chairs the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, an irony—like so much about the United Nations—worthy of Evelyn Waugh's bitter comedies. The idea that the United States or any law-abiding, freedom-loving state should allow an institution as thoroughly corrupt and discredited as the United Nations to determine its interests or actions is simply risible—or, rather, it would be risible if it were not so horribly close to what actually happens. It is a grimly absurd situation, one that Homer Simpson would doubtless savor. How that thought must please the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Harold Bloom reads Gibbon

Professor Harold Bloom, the famous Yale literary critic, has been reading Edward Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. We know this because he took space on the op-ed page of *The Wall Street Journal* to tell us so. Professor Bloom's reading of the great historian has led him to the surprising conclusion that what the United States needs now is "a military personage as president," and one, moreover, "who is more in the mode of Dwight Eisenhower than of Ulysses Grant." Now who do you suppose Professor Bloom has in mind? Yes, you got it in one try:

> In Wesley Clark, we have a four-star general and former NATO commander who is a diplomatic unifier, an authentic hero, wise and compassionate. That Gen. Clark saved tens of thousands of Muslim lives in Bosnia and Kosovo is irrefutable . . .

Actually, that last proposition is eminently debatable, as even a glance at the bumbling military campaign in Bosnia and Kosovo will show. But Professor Bloom believes that General Clark is "highly electable for 2004." Hence he discovers premonitions of Clark in Gibbon. Perhaps, in Professor Bloom's notorious phrase, that counts as an example of "the anxiety of influence." Maybe it is just pedantic nonsense. In any event, we were pleased to see Harold Bloom cultivating his talents as a humorist. No sensible person could take his windy political endorsement seriously. Which, come to think of it, might be why *The Wall Street Journal* chose to publish it in the first place.

"Be prepared"

The theme of Frederick W. Kagan's contribution to our series "Lengthened Shadows: America and Its Institutions in the Twenty-first Century" may be summed up in the venerable motto of the Boy Scouts: "Be Prepared." Mr. Kagan offers a brilliant and sobering look at the institution of America's military. He writes at a moment not only when the armed forces of the United States are deeply engaged in a war against terrorism, but also when the structure and strategic rationale of America's military is in the process of being transformed. New technology, new thinking about the best way to equip and deploy America's military forces, and new political realities as America's role on the world stage shifts in the aftermath of the Cold War have conspired to make this transformation of the American military an urgent item on today's political agenda. Especially since the terrorist attacks of 9/11, America's military obligations have grown exponentially: Have our military infrastructure and our tactical understanding kept pace with the new demands which world events have placed upon us?

It is often said that generals base their strategic assumptions more on past conflicts than current exigencies. As we move into the dangerous terra incognita of the twenty-first century, few decisions will be as important as those affecting our military preparedness. Mr. Kagan's reflections offer an incisive analysis of what we are doing—and what we are failing to do—to meet this essential challenge.

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Lengthened shadows: III

The art of war

by Frederick W. Kagan

The American military today may be in the best position of any military in history. Its victories over Iraq and Afghanistan have transformed not merely the way the U.S. thinks about and conducts war, but the way the entire world sees violent conflict. American technological prowess and the skill of the professional American armed forces have opened a gap in capabilities between the U.S. and its closest competitors that many see as unbridgeable. Those triumphs, as well as the American people's perception of the threats that the U.S. faces, have also served dramatically to reduce the mutual mistrust and hostility that had separated the military from the public since the Vietnam War. Trusted by its people, emulated by its friends, feared by its foes, unequalled in capability and skill, the American military is in many respects at the height of its power. Properly handled, the U.S. armed forces might be able to maintain and even extend their preeminence into the distant future.

The challenges facing the military today, however, are no less daunting than the opportunities are promising. Most leaders and observers agree that the U.S. military will have to "transform" itself in order to maintain its lead as well as to be able to meet the challenges of the present and the future for which it was not designed. At the same time, the U.S. is engaged in a war on terrorism, in peacekeeping operations in Afghanistan, Bosnia, and Kosovo, and in a massive peacekeeping, counter-insurgency, counter-terrorism, and reconstruction effort in Iraq. Tensions over nuclear proliferation remain high on the Korean peninsula and in Iran. Tensions also remain high over the cooperation of states like Syria in the war on terrorism and operations in Iraq.

These ongoing operations and threats have combined to stretch the U.S. armed forces beyond the breaking point. The Army has been compelled to deploy tens of thousands of soldiers for a full year at a time rather than the normal six months, to forego important training for those soldiers, and sometimes to send soldiers returning from one such deployment immediately into another. The National Guard and Reserves have been mobilized to an extent unprecedented since the 1970s first for "homeland defense" in the wake of the September 11 attacks and now in support of operations in Iraq, the Balkans, and elsewhere. The strain on soldiers and their families is growing, morale is declining, and it is hard to believe that these trends will not begin to take a serious toll on recruitment and retention in the near future, potentially exacerbating the problem.

The issues of transformation and military overstretch are inextricably linked. The Secretary of Defense has adopted a vision of transformation that relies on high-technology weapons systems rather than on soldiers. He has continued to pursue this program even as the armed forces have been stretched thinner and thinner. He has even

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resisted efforts by Congress to expand the military—a virtually unimaginable stance for a sitting Secretary of Defense—in order to preserve his program of military transformation. As a result, the U.S. is now attempting to transform its military in ways that hinder the conduct of current operations, even as those operations literally rip it apart. Worst of all, the current program of transformation turns its back on the approach that had brought America success so far, and flies in the face of the historical lessons about how to transform a military. If these problems remain unacknowledged and unaddressed, the U.S. may lose its predominance and endanger its security.

America achieved military dominance in 1991 with the collapse of the Soviet Union. Since no other state or group of states had been attempting to compete directly with the two superpowers, U.S. preeminence arrived unexpectedly and by default. The roots of the dominant position America holds today lie, therefore, in efforts American leaders made in the period from the late 1960s through the early 1980s to transform the military in order the better to face the U.S.S.R.

This first transformation had both a technological component and human element. In the twenty years from 1965 to 1985 America fielded a host of new weapons systems, created a global satellite constellation and advanced communications systems, and pioneered the development of entire new technologies such as stealth and precision-guided munitions (PGMs). In the midst of that technological transformation, a sociological transformation was also taking place within the armed forces. In the mid-1970s the U.S. abandoned the draft and recruited an all-volunteer professional military. Current military theory focuses almost exclusively on the technological aspect of transformation, but the human element was at least as important in bringing the American armed forces to their current level of excellence.

Almost all of the main weapons systems American forces used in Iraq and Afghanistan were developed and fielded in the 1960s and 1970s. The Air Force used new concepts of aircraft design and took advantage of computerization to produce the first generation of "super-fighters," including the F-15 and F-16, while the Navy developed its equivalent in the F-14. These aircraft, together with the F/A-18 fielded somewhat later, dominated the skies over Iraq and have led many of America's likeliest competitors to focus on air defense systems rather than on building their own aircraft with which to challenge the super-fighters.

Properly handled, the U.S. armed forces might be able to maintain and even extend their preeminence into the distant future.

Fear of the Soviet air defense systems, through which American bombers would have to penetrate to strike their targets, led to an intense program in stealth technology in the 1970s and 1980s. That program bore fruit in the form of the F-117 fighter and the B-2 bomber, used to great effect over Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq.

The family of super-fighters and other advanced aircraft designed in the 1960s and 1970s was intended to provide versatility and redundancy. It reflected a determination to be the best at everything. The F-16 was designed to be the world's best dogfighter, able to achieve extremely high kill ratios either with its Sidewinder missiles or with its guns. The F-15 is an air-superiority fighter that was always meant to rely on its superior missiles and missile control technology to defeat enemy aircraft before they got within anything like dogfighting range. The F-14 attempts to duplicate the better characteristics of both planes in a naval version—the F/A-18 is an improvement on it, especially in the area of ground attack. Each plane overlaps the others in capabilities, but each is also designed to excel in a particular niche.

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At the same time, the Air Force also fielded the A-10 ground attack aircraft. This ungainly, heavily armored plane with a 23mm anti-tank gun in its snout was designed to be the best tank-killer in the air. Its armor protects it from anti-aircraft machine guns and allows it to fly low to the ground and slowly enough to identify and engage its targets directly. It was enormously effective in Iraq, filling a specific niche that directly supported the Army's missions as well as the larger goal of destroying Iraq's armored forces. In short, it was not simply the development of PGMs that has made the U.S. Air Force the best in the world, but the quality of its aircraft across the board and in every specialty.

The current American Army is also the result of changes made in the 1970s designed to allow it to excel in many areas. In the wake of the Vietnam War, Army Chief of Staff Creighton Abrams determined to revolutionize the Army's equipment by fielding a new generation of weapons systems including the M1 "Abrams" Tank, the Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicle, the Apache and Blackhawk helicopters, the Multiple-Launch Rocket System (MLRS), the Stinger surface-to-air missile, and the Patriot air defense system. These were the main weapons systems Army forces have used to such success in all of the post-Cold War conflicts.

The goal of this technological transformation was to provide balanced capabilities to the Army. The M1 tank is a case in point. It was armored better than any other vehicle in the world at the time, and remains incredibly hard to kill. Its 120mm main gun firing depleted uranium anti-tank rounds gave it unprecedented destructive power—there are virtually no vehicles in existence today that an M1 cannot destroy. The M1 can move at up to fifty miles per hour, an extremely high speed considering the tank's seventy-ton weight. The M1, therefore, offered superb offensive and defensive power and excellent tactical mobility.

It has proven remarkably versatile. In open maneuver warfare in the Iraqi desert the M1 fulfilled its initial design goals. The Iraqis were unable to kill it even with direct hits from their T-72 tanks, and M1s killed almost every Iraqi vehicle they fired on with one shot. In 1991 as in 2003, American armored forces were able to move much faster than the Iraqis had expected.

The M1's defensive characteristics have also made it invaluable for a range of missions its designers had not foreseen. In peacekeeping operations in dangerous areas such as Bosnia and Iraq, the M1's virtual invulnerability has been important in deterring attacks and keeping critical areas secure. The Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicle has also proved invaluable in this regard. It is no accident that almost all of the casualties American forces in Iraq have taken (apart from friendly-fire incidents) were to soldiers who were either dismounted or riding in trucks or Humvees.

The willingness to accept redundancy and inefficiency in defense programs that characterized the Army and Air Force transformations around the 1970s reflected a larger willingness to balance the development of capabilities, sometimes different, sometimes similar, across the services. At the same time the Army was developing the Patriot anti-aircraft missile, the Air Force was fielding the planes that convinced all of America's subsequent foes not even to try to fly. As the Army was planning a tank that was both nearly indestructible and indescribably lethal to enemy armored vehicles, the Air Force was fielding an aircraft specifically to kill enemy tanks. The examples of redundant development are legion.

The most recent wars have made the virtues of this redundancy manifest. On numerous occasions, including as recently as the 2003 Gulf War, weather conditions restricted the Air Force's ability to fly sorties against enemy armored concentrations. The ability of the tanks and Bradleys of the 3rd Infantry Division to survive encounters with those enemy armored forces saved American lives. The Patriot has proven largely unnecessary in its role as a system to

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shoot down enemy aircraft. Its transformation into a ballistic missile defense system, however, gave the coalition much greater confidence in its ability to handle Saddam Hussein's missiles during the last war. Redundancy in war can yield flexibility and security. It ensures that when one system fails for whatever unforeseen reason, another can take its place. It provides the ability to meet unexpected challenges. In military affairs, redundancy is a virtue.

Redundancy, of course, is expensive. During the Vietnam War and the Reagan buildup, the overriding threat of Soviet military power helped overcome America's traditional reluctance to spend money on its defense. Even Jimmy Carter, at the height of an economic recession that would cost him his presidency, felt obliged by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan to begin the massive rearmament program that Ronald Reagan inherited and enlarged still further. The excellence of the American military in the 1990s owes a great deal to those days of open coffers.

The coffers inevitably closed with the fall of the Soviet Union. As Boris Yeltsin was attempting to forge a democratic Russian Federation on the ruins of the U.S.S.R., American defense officials and civilian experts were already talking of the "strategic pause" and the "peace dividend" that were supposed to follow that epochal event. Defense budgets dwindled and efficiency became the watchword in the Pentagon and on Capitol Hill.

The focus on efficiency and economics led to an effort to adopt "business practices" into the work of the military. This effort has a long history. Robert McNamara, himself a retired Ford executive, attempted to bring business models into the Pentagon in the 1960s. He applied new metrics to the Vietnam conflict, centering on body counts. He introduced a "game-theory" approach to war in the form of "graduated pressure" in which military forces were explicitly used to send messages to the enemy, whose responses could then be predicted. In general he preferred the advice of his "whiz kids," who understood the new way of thinking, to that of the professional military officers who clung to the "outdated" modes of conducting war. The results of this approach are well known.

Since then, the armed forces have adopted successively almost every major business fad, like "total quality management," "velocity management," and "just-in-time logistics," among others. Efforts to reduce the defense budget in the 1990s in order to expand the "peace dividend" led Secretary of Defense William Cohen to announce a "revolution in business affairs" in the Pentagon, to parallel and support the "revolution in military affairs" that he sought to bring about by transforming the military. The goal was to make the Pentagon more efficient and to use the funds recouped by that efficiency to support transformation.

At the same time that Cohen and his successors were attempting to bring business models once again to the economic side of the Pentagon, others were attempting to replicate McNamara's attempts to bring business models into the conduct of war.

Redundancy in war can yield flexibility and security. It ensures that when one system fails for whatever unforeseen reason, another can take its place. It provides the ability to meet unexpected challenges.

Throughout the 1990s a series of articles and books argued that the "information revolution" then sweeping the economy had an equivalent in the realm of war. Just as businesses had had to change their entire approaches to their work as a result of information technology, so too did armies. The "new economy," according to the wisdom of its advocates in the late 1990s, had its own new rules. Military thinkers like

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retired admirals William Owens and Arthur Cebrowski, among others, argued that war in the information age also had its own new rules. They argued further that the lessons of the new economy could be translated more or less directly to the business of waging war.

In *Network-Centric Warfare* (1999), a book central to the current U.S. program to transform its military, three defense analysts argued that the "information revolution" had fundamentally altered both business and war. In the past, they claimed, success relied upon the ability to move material objects around. Businesses that could produce items more rapidly and ship them faster and cheaper succeeded; those that could not failed. Similarly, armies succeeded by moving their forces to the decisive point and time and there concentrating them to defeat a similarly concentrated enemy.

The information revolution changed all that. Success in business now lay, they argued, in moving information around. Businesses that could acquire, disseminate, and analyze information would succeed; those that could not would fail. They described the reasons for Wal-Mart's success, pointing to its tightly integrated system for gathering information at the point-of-sale and disseminating that information not only to its own executives and other stores, but also to its suppliers.

Armies, they argued, now faced the same challenges. It was no longer necessary to concentrate forces—in fact, given the speed of events and the dangers of weapons of mass destruction, it had become dangerous. Instead, the successful army was the one that acquired the most exact possible knowledge of the enemy, that analyzed that knowledge to determine which "nodes" to attack, and that directed weapons systems launched from widely dispersed platforms to strike those nodes. It would not be necessary to move many forces around, only to ensure that they were within the thousand-kilometer range of their proposed targets.

These proposals received a powerful support when Donald Rumsfeld became Secretary of Defense in January 2001. Like McNamara, Rumsfeld came from the business community, and was determined to bring his business expertise to bear on the Pentagon bureaucracy. He believed enthusiastically in the Network-Centric Warfare model then being propounded, and he went even further. Determined to transform the military in accord with NCW ideas, Rumsfeld was also determined to do it at the lowest possible cost. He adopted a business approach to that problem as well.

A business can improve its bottom line by focusing its resources on the few things it does very well and abandoning markets in which it is performing poorly. Efficiency is all in business, a fact reflected in the many mergers that have taken place during the recent economic downturn. By eliminating redundancy and focusing on the areas in which they can excel, companies can dramatically improve their competitive position in some markets, even at the cost, sometimes, of abandoning others. Rumsfeld has adopted this approach in the area of military transformation.

America's biggest lead, the "market" in which the U.S. has the best competitive advantage, now lies in the realm of long-range reconnaissance and strike capabilities. No other state or group of states can begin to match America's ability to identify a huge number of targets and to attack them from platforms thousands of miles away.

The advantage in this area is greater than that in others. The U.S. has the best ground forces in the world, but China has larger ground forces, Germany has excellent tanks, Russia has large amounts of artillery, and so forth. America has the greatest ability to move and supply large forces to distant theaters, but Britain, France, and Russia can project force halfway around the world as well. None of those states, however, can come close to matching America's ability to identify, track, and destroy targets from great distances away.

Even if Rumsfeld had not been an en-

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thusiastic supporter of Network-Centric Warfare, it was only natural that his application of business principles to war would lead him to focus on America's capabilities with precision-guided munitions. This is currently the area of America's greatest competitive advantage. By directing funding into it, the U.S. can obtain an even greater competitive advantage—perhaps even the "lockout" that NCW advocates seek. In business, "lockout" occurs when one company attains such a predominant position that it can not be challenged.

The watchwords for the Rumsfeld Pentagon have, therefore, been focus and efficiency. The Pentagon has repeatedly stated that all new weapons systems will be evaluated primarily on the degree to which they further the armed forces' ability to conduct Network-Centric Warfare. Systems that bring other capabilities to the force have received less attention, less funding, and have sometimes been cancelled.

All of the services have participated in this race to a single goal. For example, the Navy now sells every new ship design on the basis of its ability to support Network-Centric Warfare. The Air Force has focused most of its development in the past decade on upgrading its PGMs and the ability of its aircraft to carry and control them. It now attempts to justify the F-22 and the Joint Strike Fighter on the grounds that they will support NCW the better, although the evidence for that claim is sketchy at best.

The result of these service changes will be to homogenize the armed forces. No longer will each service bring unique capabilities to the table, but all will now provide the same capability—the capability to identify and attack targets with PGMs at great distances. This homogenization will inevitably create redundancies that Rumsfeld's business model cannot tolerate in its search for efficiency. The Secretary of Defense recognized that fact early on. He cancelled the Crusader artillery system in part on the grounds that it did not provide capabilities different from those already provided by the air forces. He planned, prior to the Iraq war, to eliminate at least two and possibly as many as four of the Army's ten active duty combat divisions, since they, too, were becoming redundant as organizations that could identify and destroy enemy targets.

No longer will each service bring unique capabilities to the table, but all will now provide the same capability—the capability to identify and attack targets with PGMs *at great distances.*

Although the Joint Strike Fighter and the F-22 seem to be extremely redundant and do not really provide dramatically different capabilities, ironically, both systems have survived initial searches for efficiency on the grounds that they directly support the NCW concept.

The Rumsfeld vision of military transformation, therefore, is completely unbalanced. It will provide the U.S. with armed forces that do one thing only, even if they do it superbly well. They will be able to identify, track, and destroy enemy targets from thousands of miles away and at little or no risk to themselves. The suite of capabilities that the transformation of the 1970s and 1980s provided will be narrowed into a confined band of excellence. The business model that brought success to many companies in the 1990s will be adopted as the basis for this transformation, and all of America's future success will rest upon this one capability and the applicability of this single model. It is one of the most seductive and dangerous visions of modern times.

The Rumsfeld vision of military transformation suffers from a wide variety of flaws, some of which I have already considered in another forum[1] One of the most significant

1 See "War and Aftermath" in *Policy Review*, August-September 2003.

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flaws is the misunderstanding of the concept of the "revolution in military affairs" (RMA) that underlies this vision.

Although current documents mention a "revolution in military affairs" or the "information revolution" much more rarely these days, the concept remains central to present-day efforts to transform the military. All of the theoretical justifications for the current approach to transformation, written mostly at the turn of the millennium or just before, rely on this concept as their essential justification. The fact that it is slipping from current parlance reflects the reality that agencies responsible for transformation are focusing increasingly on the nuts-and-bolts of their task, and have stopped thinking seriously about the philosophical underpinnings and assumptions on which it is based.

The concept of RMA is a relatively new one in the history of military theory. Soviet military leaders coined it in the 1960s to describe the effects of mating thermonuclear weapons (hydrogen bombs) with intercontinental ballistic missiles. They argued that the unprecedented destructive power of thermonuclear weapons and the ability of ICBMs to penetrate even the densest air defense network created conditions for war so fundamentally different from those that had existed beforehand as to have brought about a revolution in the nature of war itself. Virtually overnight many of the basic guidelines that had led previous commanders to success had become irrelevant and new principles had to be sought.

The concept made its way slowly to the West, and really only came into vogue in the late 1980s to describe an entirely different revolution—the "information revolution" that we have considered above. In the interim, however, military historians have taken up the concept with enthusiasm, many to support it, a few to attack it. "Revolutions in Military Affairs" now form an important part of syllabi at defense educational institutions such as West Point and the National Defense University. Historians and military theorists have labeled everything from the advent of armored warfare to Napoleonic logistics and the development of the longbow as RMAs. Others have sought out the absurdities of some of these arguments to assail the entire concept as meaningless. Whatever the merits of those assaults, however, they will fall on deaf ears in the Pentagon, where the RMA has become the critical concept underpinning American defense policy today.

In truth, the concept of a revolution in military affairs is an important one for understanding the evolution of military development. In the course of military history there have been a series of dramatic breaks in the way war is fought at the most basic level. Warfare changed dramatically from 1700 to 1760, from 1813 to 1863, from 1870 to 1915, from 1942 to 1991. Although many of the traditional guidelines to success continued to apply from one period to the next, many others also changed. In each change there were elements of long-term evolution, which has led some to argue that the term "*revolution* in military affairs" is inappropriate. Yet the nature of war changes most rapidly when major wars are actually being fought, so that for all the theorizing and development that preceded them, the outbreak of the American Civil War in 1861, the Franco-Prussian War in 1870, World War I in 1914, and World War II in 1939, for instance, led to sudden and dramatic changes nevertheless.

The problem with the current vision of military transformation, therefore, is not that it relies on the concept of a revolution in military affairs, but that it does not properly understand that concept. Since the 1980s, advocates of an "American RMA" based on information technology have tended to define the term as an "asymmetrical advantage" that one state acquires over its opponents. They have sought to develop transformation programs to extend that asymmetrical advantage indefinitely into the future, so that the other states of the world would never catch up, and American pre-eminence (or "lockout") would be secured, to all intents and purposes, forever.

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History does not support such an interpretation of this concept, however. In each of the periods in recent history in which one might see a fundamental change in the nature of war, it is true that normally one state begins with a dramatic lead. Revolutionary France's ability in the 1790s to mobilize vast conscript armies and to sustain that mobilization for years gave her an important advantage over continental states unable to match such levels of mobilization. Prussia's early and enthusiastic development of a dense railroad net and of the general staff structure needed to plan for and control a railroad mobilization led directly to her crushing victories over Austria in 1866 and over France in 1871. The Nazis' creation of a technologically advanced and highly trained armored force, along with a significantly better armored warfare doctrine, led directly to the destruction of the Franco-British army in 1940.

The problem with the current vision of military transformation, therefore, is not that it relies on the concept of a revolution in military affairs, but that it does not properly understand that concept.

In each case, however, we must also consider the sequel. Napoleonic France, Imperial Germany, and Nazi Germany all ultimately lost subsequent wars and were destroyed. The reasons for those failures are enlightening about the limitations of the current definition of revolution in military affairs.

Faced with the challenge of Revolutionary France, the other states of Europe were initially reluctant to make the social and political changes necessary to raise and maintain the large armies required to meet that challenge. Over years of sustained and unsuccessful warfare, however, France's enemies gradually changed their minds. Austria, Prussia, and Russia all eventually mobilized large forces. In Russia's case the army went from around 250,000 at the end of the eighteenth century to about 850,000 in 1815, a level at which it remained until an even more dramatic increase during the Crimean War. The mobilization and support of such large armies caused problems for all of the states of Europe, and led, in part, to the revolutionary disturbances that wracked the continent following Napoleon's final fall. The leaders of those states, however, ultimately accepted such costs in order to be able successfully to adapt to the new requirements of war. They were thereby able to defeat Napoleon.

The Germans went through a similar process twice. Their advantages in railway mobilization in 1866 and 1870 had been greatly reduced by 1914. France and Russia had spent fortunes upgrading their own railway systems and had developed general staff structures able to match the Germans' planning abilities. As a result, the German mobilization in 1914 was matched by equally skillful French and Russian mobilizations, the German war plan broke down, and Germany was ultimately crushed under the weight of superior allied forces. Germany's enemies had successfully adopted the methods that had led Germany to success in the mid-nineteenth century and then turned those methods against the Germans during World War I.

Hitler faced a kindred problem. The techniques that generated his initial successes against the French and the British, who had both developed inappropriate armored doctrines and tanks largely unsuitable for the sort of rapid mobile warfare the Germans fought, did not lead subsequently to victory against the Soviets. Problems of planning and confused objectives, among other things, vitiated initial German successes in 1941, and allowed the Soviets time to recover. When they did, they began to implement an armored warfare doctrine superior to the one the Germans had been using and to build tanks excellently designed to support that doc-

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trine. Beginning with their victory at Stalingrad in late 1942, the Soviets conducted a virtually unbroken march to the west that resulted in the capture of Berlin in May 1945.

Even the "nuclear revolution" itself, the change in warfare that had led to the coining of the acronym RMA, saw a similar rapid balance. The U.S. and the Soviet Union fielded thermonuclear-tipped ICBMs at virtually the same time, and throughout the Cold War each advance by one side in this area was matched almost immediately by the other.

It goes without saying that each of these examples had much more complexity than can be explored in this article. Napoleon's adversaries made many changes to their armies other than simply increasing their size, including incorporating and improving on other aspects of Napoleonic warfare that had brought Bonaparte his early successes. Germany's Schlieffen Plan failed in 1914 not simply because the French mobilized well, but also because Schlieffen's successor had altered it in important ways. Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union failed partly because of Hitler's inappropriate interference in the operation and because of his insistence on trying to achieve all of his ultimate objectives simultaneously, among other things.

The issues identified in this article, however, were central parts of the explanations for the outcome of all of these conflicts. If the allies in 1813, the French and Russians in 1914, and the Soviets in 1942 had not successfully adopted the critical features of the new military thinking that had brought their enemies victory, it is most unlikely that the other factors contributing to their success would have saved them from defeat. The key point is that the failings of Napoleon and the Germans would have been irrelevant if they had retained the asymmetrical advantages with which they had started. Their inability to react perfectly when they had lost those advantages was what led them to defeat.

History so far, therefore, has been very clear that "asymmetrical advantages" gained by one state do not normally last very long. Technology and technique inevitably spreads. Other states acquire either similar or counteracting capabilities. The final victors of each new "revolutionary" epoch have not usually been the states that initiated the revolution, but those that responded best once the technologies and techniques had become common property.

It also shows that the initial successes those "revolutionary" states achieved have tended to breed arrogance and overconfidence, hindering their ability to respond as other states began to match their capabilities. Napoleonic France, Imperial Germany, and Nazi Germany all ossified in their techniques after the initial victories, and lost to enemies who, forced by defeat, built on their own advances more successfully.

The search for an indefinite American "asymmetrical advantage," therefore, requires not merely a revolution in military affairs: it also requires a fundamental revolution in human affairs of a sort never seen before. It requires that America continue to change her armed forces so rapidly and successfully that no other state can ever catch up—indeed, that no other state in the world even try.

This unrealistic requirement is central to the current vision of military transformation. Since, according to this vision, American armed forces will only be able to do one thing—strike targets precisely from great distances away—they will succeed only on two conditions. First, they will always have to fight wars in which striking targets precisely from great distances will lead directly to victory, and second, they will always have to fight enemies incapable of either matching that skill or of preventing the U.S. from using it. The precise weapons will *always* have to get through, their effects will *always* have to be decisive, and no enemy will *ever* be able to fire them effectively at American forces.

History suggests that these conditions

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will not be met for very long. But transformation enthusiasts today argue that the U.S. is in a unique position and that the rules really have changed. It is worth considering in some detail, therefore, whether or not it is likely that the U.S. will be able to retain its asymmetric advantages for decades to come.

The first question in this debate concerns the proliferation of the technology the U.S. relies upon now to maintain this advantage.

History so far, therefore, has been very clear that "asymmetrical advantages" gained by one state do not normally last very long.

The situation in this regard is both promising and alarming. On the one hand, American technological superiority rests primarily on computerization. Precision guided munitions are precisely guided because of the computer chips in their guidance systems and the communications systems that allow them to home in on either GPS coordinates or laser designators. The ability of American forces to identify, track, and strike targets also relies on such computer chips, and on the satellites that support the communications systems. The proliferation of microprocessors and satellites, therefore, could start an adversary on the road to challenging American technological preeminence.

It hardly needs stating that computerization is a revolution racing throughout the world, not just in America, or even that most microprocessors these days are made outside of the U.S. The American satellite constellation is the most sophisticated and dense of any, but many states have the ability to launch satellites themselves or to hire private companies to launch them. The real American advantage in this regard results from two things: money and time.

Building the current satellite constellation was exorbitantly expensive. The U.S. probably would not have undertaken it initially but for the fear of the Soviet Union. The development of PGMs and building large numbers of them was also extremely expensive. Very few states in the world today have the economic resources necessary even to begin such massive programs, let alone see them rapidly through to conclusion.

The very age of the American systems, moreover, is also an asset. The U.S. has had time not merely to computerize all of its major weapons systems and the weapons they fire, but to develop dense computer networks that connect them. That networking is an important part of America's technological advantage today, and it is not something that any would-be adversary could easily or rapidly replicate. Despite the ready proliferation of the technologies themselves, therefore, it would seem, after all, that the U.S. should expect to maintain its current technological lead for quite a considerable time.

Several factors militate against this happy conclusion. For one thing, few if any of America's enemies will have the vast resource-stretching responsibilities that America has. They will be concerned only with their own region of the world and will focus their efforts on developing communications and target tracking systems only over a small portion of the globe. They will not need a dense global satellite constellation or the ability to project power over thousands of miles. The costs to them of developing systems comparable to America's, but only in a restricted geographic area, will accordingly be much smaller than the price the U.S. has had to pay to achieve that capability everywhere.

Then, too, other states can reap the benefits of modern communications systems without bearing the expensive burden of basic scientific research and development. Microprocessors, satellites, encrypted laser communications systems, cell phone systems, and the whole host of technologies that form the basis of American military superiority are now the property of the world. It will not cost America's enemies anything

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like what it cost the U.S. to develop its capabilities, either in money or in time. Since technology inevitably becomes less expensive as it proliferates and as time goes on, moreover, the situation for America's would-be adversaries will only improve in this regard.

Moreover, just as many European states drastically improved their railway networks in the nineteenth century, so now many states are improving their satellite constellations and naturally networking government and economic computer systems in order to support economic growth today. They are thereby also laying the groundwork for a rapid development of the military advantages that flow from those communications and networking capabilities. Many of the technologies that have led in the past to American success are now latent in every aspect of modern economic life, and this fact will reduce both the cost and the time required for a potential adversary to "revolutionize" its armed forces to match those of the U.S.

It should also be noted that technology is only part of the story of America's success. The way the U.S. military has integrated the technology into its professional, highly-trained armed forces has been at least as important as the quality of the technology itself. In this area, too, the U.S. has had an advantage since the mid-1970s, since most of America's likely enemies retained conscript militaries unable to match America's troops in skill, educational level, or experience. Even this advantage, however, is evaporating.

The first Gulf War started a global trend toward transforming large conscript armies into smaller professional forces. The second one has accelerated that trend. The Russians have struggled toward this goal, with only limited success, for a decade. The French abandoned their conscript military whose traditions harked back to the Revolution of 1789. Even the Chinese have recently announced that they would reduce their military and concentrate on developing a smaller, more professional and highly qualified force. The U.S. made the transition and garnered the advantages of that transition in about fifteen years. It remains to be seen how long it will take the rest of the world to do so.

When America's enemies have developed the technology and trained the people who will use it, they will also have to develop the doctrines and techniques to make it effective. In this regard, they have the most significant advantage of all. Much of America's tested doctrine has been published, much can be deduced from the CNN coverage of America's most recent wars. Once again, America's enemies can start from the position of proven success that the U.S. armed forces achieved, and build from there.

Their real advantage in this area, however, results from the fact that they will be developing armed forces specifically designed to fight an enemy with the same capabilities. America's military has not done so. American military doctrine continues to foresee fighting enemies lacking any significant capacity to deploy precision guided munitions, without dense satellite constellations and communications systems, and without the ability to strike targets precisely at great distances. It is one of the more troubling lessons of the history of new military technology that the states that pioneer the new technologies and techniques generally fail to adapt successfully to the situation in which all major states have the same technologies and techniques. It remains to be seen whether America will do any better than her predecessors in this regard.

The problems identified above are nearly all inherent in any program of military transformation. They are not unique to Rumsfeld's vision. History suggests that whatever program America adopts to transform its armed forces, her enemies will tend to catch up and level the playing field. The problem with the current program is that it relies on maintaining an overwhelming advantage in a single area of military performance indefinitely. The failure to contemplate having to fight creditable opponents and

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the imbalance of the effort to transform the military both create serious risks and vulnerabilities for American armed forces in the future.

The solution is to refocus America's efforts at transforming its military on a program designed to produce balanced capabilities and to defeat a comparably armed and capable enemy. In the first instance, that will mean rebalancing the efforts to remake the ground and the air services. Right now, the initiative is primarily reliant on air- or sea-launched weapons.

Above all, the U.S. must avoid the search for "efficiency" in military affairs. Redundancy is inherently a virtue in war.

Advocates of this approach point out that it is cheaper and safer—cheaper because maintaining large ground forces divisions is costly, and safer because it obviates the need to put America's young men and women in harm's way. This is one of the main reasons that Rumsfeld and others have repeatedly advocated cutting the size of the Army and transferring the funds saved thereby into the purchase of advanced munitions, communications, and targeting systems for the Air Force and Navy.

It is easy to show the consequences of this approach in Iraq. Armies do more than destroy targets. They hold ground passively. They provide critical police functions. They can still conduct counter-guerrilla operations much more effectively than air-launched munitions. For a country engaged in nation-building, counter-insurgency, and counter-terrorism, there is no escape from the need to have a large and capable army, and America is suffering badly now from having an army that is too small.

It is not simply that current operations require significant ground forces, however, or even that the conditions that drive that requirement are likely to persist for some considerable time. The real reason to maintain a robust army that does more than simply add sophisticated launchers to the targeting mix is that it greatly complicates the enemy's ability to respond to America's movements and capabilities.

If the enemy knows that all he will face is a barrage of precision-guided munitions, he will find counter-measures—digging too deeply for the weapons to penetrate, jamming or blinding U.S. reconnaissance assets, etc. If the enemy must face advancing American ground forces as well as PGM strikes, however, his possible reactions are much more limited. He will have to concentrate his forces to a much greater extent in order to ensure that they can face an American ground attack. It will not be sufficient for him to blind American satellites or disrupt computer networks if the ground forces rolling forward can see his soldiers through their viewing prisms and kill them with their own weapons. Deeply dug bunkers may still protect vital command and control centers and weapons, but the importance of that fact will be greatly diminished when American soldiers have control of the enemy country above ground.

Recent history highlights the importance of this fact repeatedly. In 1991 Saddam Hussein withstood thirty-nine days of devastating aerial attacks and remained undaunted. After three days of a coordinated air-ground campaign, he made peace. In 1998 he withstood another barrage of cruise missile attacks following his expulsion of weapons inspectors, and did not change his policy in the least. In 2003 he had prepared himself and his country for yet another drawn-out bombing campaign, and was stunned not by the "shock and awe" of the air campaign, but by the incredibly rapid ground offensive spearheaded by the 3rd Infantry Division, the 101st Air Assault Division, and the 1st Marine Division.

Throughout the history of airpower, evidence abounds that unbalanced attacks are much less successful than balanced attacks. German strategic bombing of Great Britain in World War I and World War II failed to

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bring that country to the peace table. Allied strategic bombing in World War II was equally ineffective until it was combined with a massive ground campaign in Germany, or the threat of a massive invasion of the Japanese home islands. Strategic bombing directed at North Vietnam, unaccompanied by any meaningful threat of a ground invasion, failed completely to achieve its purpose.

The advocates of such bombing attacks are always ready to explain that if they had been given a little more time, a few more bombs, fewer political restrictions, and so forth, they would have brought the enemy to his knees without the need for ground forces. That assertion has never been proven. Even in Afghanistan, Bosnia, and Kosovo, ground forces or the threat of their use played the decisive role in bringing the enemy to surrender. In Afghanistan and Bosnia, the U.S. relied on local forces to supply the ground troops, which helped convince the hostile regimes to give in, but also left the U.S. politically beholden to its allies and unable to achieve its political aims as a result. During the Kosovo operation Slobodan Milosevic withstood the American air attack right up until it became clear that a ground attack might follow—and then he surrendered.

In this world, anything is possible. The U.S. might win a future war relying solely on airpower, for the first time in history, with no American or local ground forces involved and no meaningful threat of their deployment. That possibility cannot be excluded. The Rumsfeld vision of military transformation, however, does not pursue that as a possibility: it relies on it as a certainty. By focusing all of America's defense resources on the single medium of airpower, Rumsfeld is betting America's future security on the conviction that the U.S. armed forces will be able to do *every time* what no military to date has *ever* been able to do. In doing so, he is greatly simplifying the task of those preparing to fight the U.S. by presenting them with only one threat to defeat.

A sound program of military transformation would proceed in exactly the opposite way. It would recognize the value of America's technological advantage in the area of precision guided munitions. It would continue to enlarge and enhance them, much as Rumsfeld currently proposes. But it would not do so at the expense of the unique capabilities that ground forces bring to bear. It would focus, instead, on developing the capabilities of ground forces that are distinct from the capabilities provided by airpower. Ground forces can seize and hold terrain, separate hostile groups, and comb through urban areas with infinitely greater precision and distinction between combatant and non-combatant than can airpower. They can present the enemy with unacceptable situations simply by occupying a given piece of land, forcing the enemy to take actions that reveal his intentions and expose him to destruction. And it goes without saying that only ground forces can execute the peacemaking, peacekeeping, and reconstruction activities that have been essential to success in most of the wars America has fought in the past hundred years.

Above all, the U.S. must avoid the search for "efficiency" in military affairs. Redundancy is inherently a virtue in war. America's leaders should intentionally design systems with overlapping capabilities, spread across the services, and should intentionally support weapons that do not directly contribute to the overarching vision of war that they are pursuing. America should continue to try to build armed forces that are the best in every category and have the latent capabilities to meet challenges that cannot now even be imagined.

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Friends of humanity?

by Roger Kimball

Bertie in particular sustained simultaneously a pair of opinions ludicrously incompatible. He held that in fact human affairs were carried on after a most irrational fashion, but that the remedy was quite simple and easy, since all we had to do was to carry them on rationally.
—J. M. Keynes, on Bertrand Russell

Oh, tell me, who first declared, who first proclaimed that man only does nasty things because he does not know his own real interests; and that if he were enlightened, if his eyes were opened to his real normal interests, man would at once cease to do nasty things, would at once become good and noble because, being enlightened and understanding his real advantage, he would see his own advantage in the good and nothing else. . . . Oh, the babe! Oh, the pure, innocent child!
—F. Dostoyevsky, *Notes from the Underground*

In February of 1793, a lapsed Presbyterian minister named William Godwin published his *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, an answer—so he believed—to the hitherto intractable problem of human happiness. Overnight, this plump compendium of Enlightened opinion transformed Godwin, then in his late thirties, from an obscure scribbler of atheistic leanings into an international celebrity. Wherever advanced thinking flourished, there were Godwin and his wife, the feminist writer Mary Wollstonecraft, celebrated. "I was nowhere a stranger," he boasted to his diary, "I was received everywhere with curiosity and kindness"—not to mention (he might have added) worshipful adulation. The following year, his didactic novel *Caleb Williams, or Things as They Are*—a fictionalized dramatization of the egalitarian ideas that fueled the *Enquiry*—seemingly cemented the fame. Godwin's many acolytes gleefully identified themselves as "Godwinites"; they began referring to "The Grand Master," "The Philosopher," an appellation formerly reserved for Aristotle. "No work in our time," Hazlitt wrote in 1815, looking back on the comet of Godwin's fame, "gave such a blow to the philosophical mind of the country [as did the *Enquiry*]. . . . Truth, moral truth, it was supposed, had here taken up its abode." Intellectuals and literary types were particularly susceptible. Robert Southey and Wordsworth enthused wildly over Godwin, as did Coleridge, who dedicated an "ardent lay" to the man who "Bade the bright form of Justice meet my way—/ And told me that her name was HAPPINESS."

Of course, sudden intoxications have a way of turning crapulous without warning. Such was the fate awaiting the reputation of Godwin and his gospel. Published when the public's infatuation with the French revolutionary "experiment" was at high tide, Godwin's *Enquiry* formed a perfect obligato to the incessant clamorings for liberty, equality, fraternity. It was just at that dawn when (said Wordsworth) it was "bliss . . . to be alive." Yes, well: tell it to Robespierre.

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Within a couple of years the Terror had translated the famous slogan into tyranny, usurpation, and panic. Then there was the war between England and France. Godwin's flame guttered as suddenly as it had ignited. Hazlitt, himself a one-time worshipper, mournfully registered the metanoia: "no one was more talked of, more looked up to, more sought after. . . . Now he has sunk below the horizon, and enjoys the serene twilight of a doubtful immortality."

Like many, Hazlitt was more disappointed than disabused. Whatever eclipse Godwin suffered in the court of public opinion, his fame, Hazlitt thought, "can never die." If his eminence seemed "posthumous," it was with the venerable majesty that marks eternal intellectual monuments. In 1812, the nineteen-year-old Shelley, freshly rusticated from Oxford, showed that the *Enquiry* still had the power to ensorcell. He thrilled to Godwin's paeans on behalf of radical equality, the abolition of private property, the tyranny of marriage as only an aristocratic heir to an estate worth £6000 per annum (more than £200,000 today) could do.

For his part, Godwin was only too happy to avail himself of loans and gifts from his new disciple. Matters cooled markedly when Shelley ran off with Godwin's sixteen-year-old daughter Mary (the future author of *Frankenstein*) without first disencumbering himself of his wife Harriet. Godwin refused to see them (though he graciously continued to accept Shelley's largess). Fortunately, Harriet soon obliged everyone by committing suicide. Before long Shelley had set up house for all involved, and Godwin was proudly writing friends that Mary was about to marry "the heir to a baronetcy."

The Shelley circus to one side, Hazlitt was right about the fate of Godwin's ideas. They suffered a temporary setback because of the Terror and the war with France: the rude intrusion of violence will do that to Enlightened moral ideas. But this was a matter of hibernation, not extinction. In many respects—in their overall drift if not in detail or rhetorical temperature—Godwin's ideas, with or without Godwin's name attached, continue to fire the imagination of . . . let's call them "idealists" or "Friends of Humanity" down to this day.

Although it is a work of nearly 800 pages in its modern editions, Godwin's *Enquiry* is nevertheless an impatient work—impatient, that is, about the human condition. Hazlitt said that Godwin's fault was "too much ambition. . . . He conceived too nobly of his fellows." That is one way of putting it. But the question remains whether such overestimation is a form of laudable generosity or culpable blindness.

Every philosophy has its master words and concepts. Chief among Godwin's is "benevolence." What his philosophy teaches, Godwin says, is a "system of disinterested benevolence." Hitherto "the whole structure of human society" has been "a system of the narrowest selfishness." That spirit of selfishness results above all from the institution of private property. Inherently, human beings are "formed to glow with benevolence." But laws, governments, institutions—all the apparatuses designed to protect and perpetuate private property and, hence, inequality—have dimmed the glow. Since "The Characters of Men Originate in Their External Circumstances" (as Godwin denominates one of his early sections), all we need to do is reform the "external circumstances" of society and, *presto* (or possibly *allegro non troppo*), men's characters will also improve. Here is the crux: Abolish private property, and mankind, finally awakened to its true interests, will cease to plot and hoard and accumulate.

I know: it sounds extravagant. But I have provided the merest bald summary. Let Godwin put some flesh on the bones:

> The spirit of oppression, the spirit of servility, and the spirit of fraud, these are the immediate growth of the established administration of property. They are alike hostile to intellectual improvement. The other vices of envy, malice, and revenge are their inseparable companions. In a state of society where men

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> lived in the midst of plenty, and where all shared alike the bounty of nature, these sentiments would inevitably expire. The narrow principle of selfishness would vanish. No man obliged to guard his little store, or provide with anxiety and pain for his restless wants, each would lose his individual existence in the thought of the general good. No man would be an enemy to his neighbours, for they would have no subject of contention; and of consequence philanthropy would resume the empire which reason assigns her. Mind would be delivered from her perpetual anxiety about corporal support; and be free to expatiate in the field of thought which is congenial to her.

In other words, the *Enquiry* is, *par excellence*, an Enlightenment product: contemptuous of the past and its institutions, boundless in its optimism and faith in the transformative power of reason.

Godwin's attack on selfishness went deep. The institution of marriage, he points out, is only an extension of the institution of private property. It, too, is an unjust "monopoly." When it comes to relations between the sexes, Godwin says, reason tells us that "no ties ought to be imposed upon either party, preventing them from quitting the attachment, whenever their judgement directs them to quit it." (Unless, of course, his daughter Mary be involved.) Godwin pondered the matter and concluded that "The abolition of the present system of marriage appears to involve no evils." Any children, he thinks, will be cared for by the benevolence of individuals or society as a whole. And the issue of sexual passion and jealousy barely makes it onto his radar.

> But "it may happen that other men will feel for her the same preference that I do." This will create no difficulty. We may all enjoy her conversation; her choice being declared, we shall all be wise enough to consider the sexual commerce as unessential to our regard. It is a mark of the extreme depravity of our present habits, that we are inclined to suppose the sexual commerce necessary to the advantages arising from the purest friendship.

It was next to this paragraph, it pains me to report, that a previous reader of a library copy of the *Enquiry* inscribed the indelicate objection "horseshit."

We all frown on the defacement of library books. But the impulse in this instance is perhaps understandable. In any event, Godwin does not confine his speculations to mundane matters like property and marriage. In an (admittedly conjectural) appendix on "Health and the Prolongation of Human Life," he dilates on his belief in the "omnipotence of mind." It works like this: Cheerfulness, he argues, is a habit "peculiarly favorable to corporeal vigor"; "the surest source of cheerfulness is benevolence"; and since his philosophy taught benevolence for breakfast, as it were, one may look forward not simply to better health among Godwinites but to "a total extirpation of the infirmities of our nature." It is one version of mind over matter.

One might worry that greater longevity would lead to overpopulation. Not so. Men in the future "will probably cease to propagate," Godwin reasons, partly because people will live so long that the population won't need topping up often, partly because "One tendency of a cultivated and virtuous mind is to diminish our eagerness for the gratification of the senses."

True political justice is not just a matter of individual gratification, of course. As individual characters become increasingly benevolent, so will the character of society as a whole. Godwin admits that he is going a bit out on a limb here, but he speculates that there are many "other improvements" that "may be expected" when society finally catches up with his philosophy.

> There will be no war, no crimes, no administration of justice, as it is called, and no government. Beside this, there will be neither disease, anguish, melancholy, nor resentment. Every man will seek, with ineffable ardour, the good of all. . . . Men will see the progressive advancement of virtue and good, and feel that, if things occasionally happen contrary to

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> their hopes, the miscarriage was a necessary part of that progress.

I hope you will agree that the historian Gertrude Himmelfarb exercised remarkable understatement when she described Godwin's political vision as "the utopia to end all utopias."

Which is not, of course, to suggest that there were not other, equally fervent, Friends of Humanity competing with Godwin for that trophy. Consider, for example, Marie-Jean-Antoine-Nicolas Caritat, the Marquis de Condorcet (1743–1794). Condorcet, the philosopher Stuart Hampshire eulogized, was "a man of gentle and ardent disposition . . . with a passionate hatred of injustice . . . the type of the philosopher-reformer of his time." Indeed. Condorcet was a mathematician of some note, one of the "Encyclopedists" who gathered around Voltaire, a true son of the Enlightenment. He espoused (with some provisos) the cause of egalitarianism, abominated religion, and hoped to see the end of the French monarchy. While serving as a member of a sub-committee of the Committee of Public Safety, Condorcet voted against the proposed Jacobin constitution. He also voted against executing the king. These were tactical errors. Condorcet was a firm Friend of Humanity. But, as the philosopher David Stove observed, his opponents, who were "even firmer Friends of Humanity, outlawed him and hunted him down, and he died in prison in 1794." During the six months he was in hiding, Condorcet dashed off his most famous work, the *Sketch for a Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Mind*. It was posthumously published, at government expense, in Year III, i.e., 1795.

It is not surprising that the Revolutionary government approved of Condorcet's work. The man himself might have been unsound, but his ideas—well, they speak for themselves. Most of the *Sketch* deals with the benighted past: "The Eighth Stage: From the invention of printing to the time when philosophy and the sciences shook off the yoke of authority"—that sort of thing. Condorcet does not really come into his own until he gets to the tenth and last "stage," which deals with "the future progress of the human mind."

Like Godwin, Condorcet foresaw all manner of glorious things awaiting humanity now that the "priests and despots" were on their way out. Enlightenment had dawned, was dawning, and inequality, both among nations and, to a large extent, among individuals, would soon be a thing of the past. "Already in Great Britain," Condorcet noted, "friends of humanity have set us an example" in their trade policies. He envisioned a number of things—state-funded pension programs, for example—which have duly materialized.

But free trade, pension schemes, and such were only the tip of the Enlightened Iceberg. Condorcet cherished "a hope that is almost a certainty" that the eradication of inequality would bring about "the absolute perfection of the human race" ("*perfectionnement même de l'espèce humaine*"). The triumph of Enlightenment principles, he said, will lead "almost every man" to cultivate the "habits of an active and enlightened benevolence" Like Godwin, again, Condorcet was an "externalist": he thought that the source of mankind's imperfections lay not in human nature but in the outward circumstances of society. Tidy up society and you can say goodbye to irritating things like selfishness. "What are we to expect," he asked,

> from the perfection of laws and public institutions . . . but the reconciliation, the identification of the interests of each with the interests of all? . . . Is there any vicious habit, any practice contrary to good faith, whose origin and first cause cannot be traced back to the legislation, the institutions, and prejudices of the country wherein this habit, this practice, this crime can be observed?

Sounds pretty up-to-date, doesn't it?

Since bad things are the fault of society, education is the solution to just about every evil. Education will lead to "the complete

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annihilation" of the age-old prejudices that nurtured the inequality of the sexes. Wars will disappear. National animosities will disappear "one by one." Advances in education will also result in a sort of scientific esperanto which will make "knowledge of the truth easy and error almost impossible," thus promoting even further the cause of equality. "We may conclude"—which is to say, Condorcet does conclude—"that the perfectibility of man is limitless" (*indéfinie*). Not content with longer life, better health, an end to infectious diseases, Condorcet ends with a Godwinian glimpse of the day when the philosopher will dwell in "an Elysium created by reason" and "death will be due only to extraordinary accidents or to the decay of the vital forces, and that ultimately the average span between birth and decay will have no assignable value."

There are many many possible responses to the Godwin-Condorcet version of human destiny. The Victorian critic Leslie Stephen touched on a few when, in an essay on Godwin's novels, he cited his subject's "frigid dogmatism" and "singular incapacity for even suspecting the humorous or fanciful aspects of life." He even allowed himself the phrase "superlative bore." But perhaps the most devastating response came from a studious, Cambridge-educated curate and professor named Thomas Robert Malthus. Malthus was well acquainted with the rosy, Enlightened view of human nature so vividly espoused by Godwin and Condorcet, among many others. Malthus's father had harbored similar views. Indeed, in 1766 he even endeavored to engage Rousseau, then visiting England, as the future tutor for his new-born son. A gracious providence intervened, but one wonders what Malthus and the paterfamilias of whole-wheat, "man-was-born-free" optimism would have made of each other.

Godwin and Condorcet saw splendid vistas opening up for humanity once it had dispensed with the albatross of religion, conventional morality, and private property. Malthus detected a few flies in the ointment. These he enumerated in *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, the first edition of which was published in 1798.

On Population became one of the most influential books of the nineteenth century. It had two additional distinctions. It was among the most reviled books of its era. It was—and is—also among the most widely misunderstood.

Malthus wrote *On Population* as an anti-utopian attack on Enlightenment optimism and the "systems of equality" (i.e., what we would call "socialism" or "communism") which that optimism promulgated. The subtitle of the first edition clarifies Malthus's intentions: Population "as it affects the future improvement of Society, with remarks on the speculation of Mr. Godwin, Mr. Condorcet, and other writers."

There are many ironies attached to the history and reception of *On Population*. One has to do with a persistent popular misunderstanding. Everyone learns about gloomy "Malthusian" prognostications in school. These involve warnings about the alleged difference between the rate at which the food supply and the population grow. Malthus is presented as the Jeremiah of overpopulation, even a covert advocate of contraception, warning that, unless humanity acts fast, it will over-breed and run out of food.

In fact, Malthus issued no such warnings. And he was certainly no advocate of birth control (a species of "vice" that he congregated under the heading of "improper arts"). What Malthus calls the "principle of population" was (in David Stove's phrase) a "steady-state" theory. It holds that, for any body of organisms, the population is always at or near the limit of the food supply. At nature's table, Malthus says, all the places are always filled. Hence, to the extent that the equality heralded by Godwin, Condorcet, *et al.*, was achieved, "distress for want of food would be constantly pressing on all mankind." The relative impoverishment of some would be replaced by the absolute impoverishment of all.

Malthus wrote *On Population* as a politi-

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cal tract. But a large part of its fame is due to its place in the history of biology. For it was the principle of population that gave Darwin and A. R. Wallace the mechanism that propelled the process of natural selection. *That* evolution occurred they knew from the fossil record and comparative anatomy. But by what means did it operate? This is where the principle of population came in. In his autobiography, Darwin recalls reading Malthus in 1838. "It at once struck me that under these circumstances favorable variations would tend to be preserved, and unfavorable ones to be destroyed. The result of this would be the formation of new species. Here, then, I had at last got a theory by which to work."

The principle of population was an essential part of what is perhaps the most successful biological theory ever formulated. It is a further irony, then, that the principle is not true, at least as regards human beings. It deserved, and received, criticism from many quarters. For one thing, Malthus contrasts the rate at which population increases with the rate at which food increases; but his theory ignores the fact that food *consists of* organic populations, i.e., stuff that according to his principle is supposed to increase "arithmetically." In later editions of his book, Malthus so modified what he said about the principle of population that he abandoned it in fact if not in words.

What he did not abandon was his hostility to the utopian theories formulated by Godwin, Condorcet, and other champions of Enlightenment. At the center of those theories is the cheery conviction that mankind is essentially rational, benevolent, and self-sacrificing. In the abstract, it is a gratifying picture; the problem is reality: human beings are not like that. As Malthus observes, "The substitution of benevolence, as the master-spring and moving principle of society, instead of self-love, appears at first sight to be a consummation devoutly to be wished. . . . But alas! That moment can never arrive." On the contrary, the exaltation of benevolence is a prescription for misery, for in suppressing self-interest one also suppresses the force through which mankind has achieved whatever moral and intellectual triumphs it can claim. Private property is indeed an impediment to universal benevolence; but universal benevolence is no more than a phantom. As Malthus observes, "To the laws of property and marriage, and to the apparently narrow principle of self-interest which prompts each individual to exert himself in bettering his condition, we are indebted for all the noblest exertions of human genius, for everything that distinguishes the civilised from the savage state."

Like most such schemes, the Godwin-Condorcet brand of utopia is essentially *dis*establishing of the past and its legal, economic, and religious institutions. But it is one of the bitterest lessons of history that, although human institutions are often the cause of "much mischief to society," they are, Malthus noted, "light and superficial in comparison with those deeper-seated causes of evil which result from the laws of nature and the passions of mankind." Abolish private property and the result would be not the extinction but the enhancement of selfishness: "Were there no established administration of property, every man would be obliged to guard with force his little store. Selfishness would be triumphant. The subjects of contention would be perpetual."

The moral? In part, that Friends of Humanity are no friends of humanity. It is easy to smile at the musings of a Godwin or a Condorcet. But it is worth recalling how many progeny they have spawned—not only Marx, Lenin, Stalin, and other such thoroughgoing Friends of Humanity, but also myriad contemporary well-wishers who, though less rigorous, nevertheless combine the emotion of benevolence with imperative moralism. It is a combination that promises paradise but in fact, as David Stove put it, "is infallibly and enormously destructive of human happiness." Reflecting on the sudden eclipse of Godwin's reputation, Hazlitt asked: "Were we fools then, or are we dishonest now?" The answer, alas, is Yes.

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Carl Jung: the Madame Blavatsky of psychotherapy

by Anthony Daniels

It goes without saying, almost, that the unexamined life is not worth living, but the question biographers need to ask themselves is whether the minutely examined life is worth reading. And the answer to this question, taken in the abstract, is that it depends.

It depends, principally, though not entirely, on the subject of the biography. If his life is so momentous, his achievements so great, or his effect upon history so tremendous (usually for the worse), that a detailed account of his life will increase our understanding not just of him but of the world in which we live, then a volume of large size need not daunt us, or cause us to fear that we are wasting time that might be better employed than reading about the fluctuations in the life of a person of limited consequence. Lamentably, Hitler is among the figures about whom we can hardly know too much: Lenin, Stalin, and Mao are of similar ilk. Professor Frank's five-volume biography of Dostoyevsky is not a page too long: not merely because Dostoyevsky was a great writer (there are many great writers about whom one would not wish to read a five-volume biography), but because an understanding of nineteenth-century Russia, with whose problems Dostoyevsky wrestled so perceptively and prophetically, as well as wrongheadedly and idiosyncratically, is so vital to an understanding of the modern world. Indeed, once you have grasped the role of the intelligentsia in late Tsarist Russia, much of what seems at first sight opaque in the modern world becomes a great deal clearer.

Is Carl Gustav Jung, the Swiss psychiatrist, of the company about whose lives we can afford to be spared no detail? I think the answer most decisively is No, though many fat books have already been written about him, and I suspect that there are yet more to come. His contribution to positive human knowledge was small and disputable, his writings diffuse and contradictory, his character dubious, and his only lasting effect that upon a small if devoted coterie, though he enjoyed for a time the status of omnicompetent guru of world fame. Jung's career was mainly interesting as a social phenomenon rather than as a great scientist or writer. On his intrinsic merits and interest, Jung deserves an essay rather than a tome, though boiling his huge oeuvre into a few pages requires real intellectual labor, unlike an accretion of facts about his life. The present volume, *Jung: A Biography* by Deirdre Bair,[1] fully partakes, alas, of the prevalent disease of modern biography, the literary equivalent of terminal and untreatable heart failure, in which there is a gross swelling of the body caused by the accumulation of useless fluid. The size of biographies in general has increased, is increasing, and ought to be diminished: and

1 *Jung: A Biography*, by Deirdre Bair; Little Brown & Company, 860 pages, $35.

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the first principle that biographers should learn is that all facts are not created equal. No, not even all extra-marital relationships.

Jung as a social phenomenon is certainly interesting. He died in 1961, and I vaguely remember him from my childhood as being one of the triumvirate of Germanic gurus who were listened to on all subjects, and whose utterances were considered of a gnomic wisdom so great that they were above contradiction or even analysis. The triumvirate was composed of Albert Einstein, Albert Schweitzer, and Jung.

They were all helped by their appearance, as well as by their accents, so well suited to wisdom. Einstein was the real thing, of course, a genius and a decent man, capable of brilliant insight expressed in few words (when, for example, he was told that 100 Aryan scientists had signed a letter condemning the theory of relativity, he replied, "Why a hundred? If I were wrong, one would have been enough."). Schweitzer, a theologian, musicologist, and doctor, loved the natives of Gabon in a slightly condescending, and definitely abstract, way, and treated his wife and children abominably. As for Jung, the most famous image of him—the one that comes to my mind whenever his name arises (though I can't claim I think of him often)—is of him in old age with his gold-rimmed spectacles pushed up over his forehead. Somehow, this conveys vastly greater wisdom, or at least concentrated effort after wisdom, than merely looking through them would have done. It was as though, by depriving himself of common-or-garden sight, the vulgar kind that you and I habitually avail ourselves of, he was achieving a more penetrating kind of x-ray or psychic vision, the type that gets to reality without passing through appearance. And indeed, the suggestion of charlatanry has clung to him as persistently as that of wisdom. However, if you sling enough praise, some of it sticks.

What exactly were his achievements? Oddly enough, although this biography is more than 800 pages long (649 of them are text, each of them so closely printed that they are the equivalent of two normal pages), by the time you finish it you will nevertheless be hard put to say. You will know a lot about the petty quarrels and squabbles in which Jung repeatedly engaged, and about the details of his domestic life, but relatively little about why any of these things matter in the first place. The author therefore assumes not only a familiarity with Jung's ideas, and a sympathy towards them, but that the reader also assumes that Jung is worthy of such a lengthy biography. This is not an assumption I share, and though the book is written in serviceable prose, it contains not a single humorous remark. From very early on, therefore, I picked it up with some words that Macaulay wrote in a review of a two-volume biography of Lord Burleigh echoing through my mind like the insistent snatch of a tune (I quote from memory): Compared with the labour of reading these volumes, all other labour, the labour of thieves on the treadmill, the labour of children in the mines, the labour of slaves on the plantation, is but a pleasant recreation. That Miss Bair has been diligent is indisputably true; that her diligence has been wisely applied, unfortunately, is a more open question.

Some men are born charlatans, some achieve charlatanry, and some have charlatanry thrust upon them. Jung was decidedly not born a charlatan—or at least, he was not one throughout the whole of his career. True, he grew up in a family with a more than average number of table-rappers, which no doubt inclined him later to the study of the esoteric (for it certainly never occurred to him to wonder why the esoteric was, in fact, esoteric), and was subjected in his youth to that Teutonic windiness which comes so easily, though no means inevitably, to those who think and write in the German language. There is nothing quite like esoteric windiness for creating a penumbra of profundity, to which bored society ladies are drawn like flies to dung: and this no doubt explains how he became the Madame Blavatsky of psychotherapy. At the same time, however, he received a

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thorough grounding in classics as well as in science, spoke four languages fluently, could read Latin as if it were his native tongue, was not bad at Greek, and contributed several expressions to our daily discourse—complex, collective unconscious, archetypes, animus and anima, persona, introvert and extrovert—which by itself is far more than most of us will ever achieve. This is not the same as saying, however, that he contributed to human knowledge: for it is perfectly possible to give names to non-existent entities.

Jung was the scion of a distinguished family, but his father, a talented scholar of oriental languages without the dynamism to pursue his academic interests, was an impoverished evangelical pastor who died while Jung was still a student. At an early age, therefore, Jung became the head of a family, and the habit of responsibility reinforced the taste for dominance that he exhibited throughout his life.

Jung's first choice of career after his graduation as a doctor was as a surgeon, but he needed a salary in order to pay back the loans that had kept his family afloat during his studies, and surgeons-in-training were unpaid. He therefore took a job as an assistant to Dr. Bleuler at the Bergholzli asylum near Zurich. There he remained for nine years, submitting to the almost monastic rules for doctors laid down by Bleuler who, aware of the impotence of doctors to do much for their patients, compensated for it by imposing a regime of meticulous, not to say pedantic, observation and recording of their every word and deed.

A man of Jung's temperament chafed at this regime, with its seemingly pointless accumulation of observations, and he undertook some experiments that were to make him famous beyond the Bergholzli. These were the word association tests. He would present a subject with a word and ask him to reply with the first word that came into his head in response. By measuring the time it took for the subject to reply to various words, and to measure such things as rises in his heart and respiratory rates, as well as the electrical conductance of his skin, which was increased by the slight sweating that occurs when someone is emotionally aroused, Jung was able to detect which words carried an emotional load that could then be explored further. The subject himself was not aware of his own hesitations, or of the physiological changes that took place within him, and so Jung's experiments proved the existence of pre-conscious mentation. (They are also the basis of lie-detection by the polygraph.) They confirmed at least an aspect of Freud's theories.

A less ambitious man than Jung might have been content to continue with such experiments indefinitely, for they were clearly capable of infinite refinement. But Jung was an intellectual rather than an empirical scientist, however painstaking his original research had been, and he was not content to potter in a laboratory for ever.

His next contribution was the theory of archetypes and the collective unconscious. The Bergholzli was full of psychotics, a class of patient of whom Freud had little experience, believing their disturbance to be beyond the reach of psychoanalysis. Jung sensibly believed that chronic psychosis was probably caused by some as yet undiscovered injury of the brain, possibly by an internal or external toxin, since it is not very plausible that a person should be unable to talk sense for more than half a century as a result of some minor psychological trauma. He nevertheless also thought it worth paying attention to their delusions, which might uncover something about the way the mind worked.

One of his patients, who has gone down in history as the solar-phallus man, thought (among many other strange things) that there was a phallus that emerged from the sun, and that by causing this solar appendage to move, he controlled the weather, particularly the wind. Jung subsequently discovered, in his reading about ancient myths, that there was a Persian Mithraic belief of exactly the same kind as his patient's. Now his patient was not a

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well-educated or widely read man, so it seemed to Jung impossible that he had learnt of the Mithraic myth from external sources. He therefore concluded that the form of myths was almost—as we should now put it—hard-wired into the human psyche, and he called these forms archetypes. The collective unconscious was full of such archetypes.

Jung was a preternaturally unclear writer and thinker: he would never say anything clearly when obfuscation would do. Whether this was from lack of talent or an unconscious appreciation that clarity led to the possibility of contradiction and even refutation, no one can say, but the precise nature of archetypes, their ontological status as it were, has remained unclear ever since. At any rate, the solar-phallus man's delusion, which he quoted for the rest of his long life, was the rock on which his theory was built: a somewhat inadequate basis for an entire, far-reaching theory about the mental life of all of humanity. But Jung's theorizing was always like an inverted pyramid: a mountain of speculation resting on a pin-prick of fact.

There were obvious problems with the theory of archetypes. The theory suggested itself to Jung because of the exact, or very close, correspondence between the madman's delusion and the original Mithraic myth: but how close did correspondences have to be before they were manifestations of archetypes, which were more platonic forms than actual contents of the mind? Only an analyst can say, of course, and there is no public criterion other than the analyst's authority.

Of course, Jung's theory suggests connections with Kantian philosophy, and even with Chomsky's theory of language. The mind is not a tabula rasa, but has inborn or inherent capabilities or propensities: this follows from our biological nature, which explains why we, but not goldfish, can speak. But—as with much in Jung—his vague formulations are tantalisingly suggestive rather than probative.

He never successfully tackled the problem of the distinction between the psychotic expression of an archetype and a normal one. By suggesting that we all, sane and mad alike, make use of archetypes, he ignored, and helped to collapse, the distinction between the normal and abnormal. But even if we do in fact all carry archetypes in our minds, and make use of them, we don't all end up in the Bergholzli believing that we can create the wind by moving a penis that emerges from the sun, and believe it so strongly that it impedes our ability to get on with our daily lives.

Nevertheless, Jung's interest in myth suggested to him something that I think is probably true, though not easily provable: that we all have and utilize a mythmaking capacity, and that this capacity is necessary for us to carry on in the world and make sense of our lives (Freud thought, by contrast, that acceptance of the literal truth would set us free). Our memory of our own lives is full of personal mythology, both positive and negative: and not many of us can tell an unvarnished story about our past, for it is the varnish that makes our past meaningful to us. Even the mythologizing of psychotics can come to be useful to them, resulting (sometimes) in an accommodation with the world impossible for them to achieve without it. I recall, for example, a schizophrenic who believed that he was at the center of a vast world plot to assassinate him. He had lived for many years in one small room in a boarding house, from which he rarely ventured out, with a photograph beside his bed of his two children as they had been at the time of his first psychotic breakdown, since when he had not seen them. He told me that he was glad that he had not had any contact with them since, though naturally he was also sad to have missed them growing up, because their lives would have been in danger had they continued to visit him: for the plotters who were seeking to kill him would most certainly have sought to kill them as well. Not only was his deeply impoverished life in a single room full of meaning and even excitement for him on account of his

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being at the center of world events, but the indifference of his children towards him, otherwise deeply painful, was satisfactorily explained, or explained away. Clearly, restoration of such a man to normal, by removing his delusions, or personal myths, would by now have been cruel, for it would have brought him face to face with a very dismal reality. Jung would have understood this, as modern check-list or decision-tree doctors would not: though it is perhaps worth pointing out that it was the man's tendency to psychotic mythologizing that resulted in the impoverished life from the true appreciation of which he had to be protected in the first place. Of course, it would be open to Jung to reply that the man's mythologizing was itself a flight from a previous reality lacking a meaning for him, to which any unreality was preferable, and was therefore in one sense adaptive. But the majority of psychotic myths or delusions are not adaptive, quite the reverse. The extreme selectiveness of Jung's evidence led him to false and even wild generalizations: or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that his false generalizations led him to the extreme selectiveness of his evidence.

Jung entered very murky waters indeed when he suggested that the collective unconsciousness of differing races and nations varied as to contents. He never offered any opinion about, or even evinced much interest in, the origin of the collective unconsciousness, whether it was in the genes of the people who shared it, or whether it was a cultural artifact: whether, for example, a man born of German parents but brought up in Bolivia would share the German collective unconscious. His very imprecision on this point, combined with his increasingly pagan mysticism and certain remarks he had made about the difference between the psychology of Jews and Germans, made him pleasing to the Nazis. "Each race has its soul, each soul its race—its own unique inner and outer architectonic shape, its characteristic form of appearance and characteristic expression of lifestyle." Is this Jung? It could almost be—but actually it is Alfred Rosenberg.

Was Jung in fact a Nazi sympathizer? This is a question that has agitated Jung scholarship for years, without producing a decisive answer. Miss Bair puts the case very fairly, and is a witness neither for the prosecution nor for the defense. On the one hand, Jung remained president of a Nazi-sponsored international organization of psychotherapists, ascending to the presidency after its previous president, Dr. Ernst Kretschmer, resigned rather than be a cipher of the Nazis. This gives the impression of opportunism, to say the least, akin to those "aryans" who availed themselves of legal opportunities to appropriate choice real estate from dispossessed Jews, or to academics who occupied university chairs vacated by proscribed Jews. Moreover, Jung is not known to have uttered anti-Nazi sentiments publicly when the Nazis were in the ascendant: on the contrary, his words were always very carefully ambivalent, so that they never unequivocally said anything at all, but had—like so many of his utterances—a vague penumbra of meaning, rather than meaning itself. For example, in an interview with Radio Berlin, Jung said that he thought it natural that German youth led the drive for nationalism. The interviewer asked him what he thought the task of his psychology was in such a period. Jung replied that it should help realize "more consciousness and self-reflection." He went on:

> If we do not succeed in getting this view, it may easily happen that we are as it were unconsciously swept along by events. For mass movements have the peculiarity of overpowering the individual by mass suggestion and making him unconscious. The political or social movement gains nothing by this when it has swarms of hypnotized camp followers.

This has something for Nazis and anti-Nazis alike: you could argue for a thousand years and not come to a firm conclusion as to whether it was pro or anti. Likewise, his concluding remarks in the interview are difficult to interpret in a simple way: "times of

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mass movement," he said, "are times of leadership," and the triumphant leader was "an incarnation of the nation's psyche and its mouthpiece, the spearhead of the phalanx of the whole people in motion." Well, is that for or against Adolf Hitler, answer yes or no? You could sift the entrails for ever and not quite make the pattern out.

On the other hand, Jung undoubtedly helped some Jews to escape from Germany, and supported them financially (not difficult for him to do, since he had married the second richest heiress in Switzerland, but still better than nothing). And Miss Bair presents evidence that Jung eventually became an informant for the OSS. One is strongly reminded of the career of the late President Mitterand, who became a resistant when it was clear that the good Marshal's days were numbered.

Where does this leave the question of whether Jung was a Nazi sympathizer? A simple answer is not possible. He was an equivocator: I don't think he would have been devastated if the Nazis had won, and he would undoubtedly have made his peace with them; still, he didn't actually want them to win. All one can say is that he wanted to be on the winning side, and his equivocation, his inability to say anything straightforward about the most burning issue of his day, of his lifetime, was simply a manifestation of his uncertainty at the time as to who was going to win. In other words, Jung—in common with 99.99999 percent of humanity—was not a moral giant. Like most bullies, he was also a coward: or, as we say in Britain, he was not a man to go into the jungle with.

But was he an anti-semite? This is another question that has agitated Jung scholarship for many years. Freud thought so, but Freud was about as scrupulous towards those who crossed him, or dissented from his revelations by so much as one jot or tittle, as a sewer rat. The famous parting of the ways between Freud and Jung, which both Freudians and Jungians have always presented as a matter of profound principle, namely whether or not all human behavior is, at bottom, sexual in explanation, reminds me rather of the time when I had two Rastafarians in my ward who had smoked too much dope and each believed himself to be Haile Selassie. I asked one of them what he thought of the other. "Ha!" he said. "He's just mad." The struggle between Freud and Jung was between two would-be saviors of mankind, and each sought to impose monotheism upon the world, or that part of it concerned with psychotherapy, with himself as God.

One thing that Miss Bair's doorstop biography brings out exceedingly clearly, though I doubt it was ever intended to do so, is the unutterable pettiness and self-absorption of the founders of psychotherapy. Their storms in a teacup make most academic quarrels seem like the First World War. Here was a healing discipline that was supposed to help people achieve some kind of mental equilibrium, and its founders were engaged upon court intrigues of Byzantine complexity, nastiness, and inconsequence.

Jung's character emerges from the book without much credit. No doubt he could be charming, and he had the kind of charisma that attracted rich society ladies with too much time on their hands (in one remark stunningly lacking in self-knowledge, Jung demanded to know what he had done to deserve to be surrounded by so many such women). But he formed a ménage à trois without ever acknowledging the suffering it caused his very decent wife, much less apologizing for it. He presented himself as a helpless victim of circumstance in this matter, alleging that there was nothing he could do to alter things. Supposed fate is the last resort of the scoundrel. Physically large, he browbeat his associates and was not above behaving with singular rudeness to those whom he disdained, for example by talking very loudly during their lectures or presentations. This is not attractive.

What was Jung's lasting legacy? He founded a small and on the whole harmless esoteric psychotherapeutic cult. His doc-

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trines will never attract large numbers of people because his writings and teachings are diffuse, contradictory, and overloaded with erudition that partakes more of pedantry than of scholarship. (He reminds me often of those enthusiastic amateur scholars of the nineteenth century who sought to prove by means of phonological coincidences such things as that the Mayans were really the lost tribe of Israel, or by numerological analysis of Shakespeare's sonnets that Shakespeare, in the sense of the author of the plays, was really Francis Bacon. The determination and ingenuity are admirable, but the additions to knowledge exiguous.)

To read Jung is to enter a world more of connotation than of denotation, of meanings hinted at rather than expressed forthrightly. To extract a definite opinion from Jung is like trying to catch an eel with soapy hands, or trap steam with a butterfly net. His esoteric erudition is formidable: it is difficult to refute a man who will not say what he means, but backs whatever he means up with a plethora of references to fourteenth-century texts. Actually, Jung was grossly superstitious, had no idea what a logical argument was, and was capable of believing the purest nonsense. Writing of Paracelsus in 1941, for example, Jung said:

> The firmamental body is the corporal equivalent of the astrological heaven. And since the astrological constellation makes a diagnosis possible, it also indicates therapy. This intuitive conception is, in my opinion, an achievement of the utmost historical importance, for which no one should begrudge Paracelsus undying fame. Its full development is reserved for the future.

Would you entrust yourself to a man who claimed to believe that? Only, I think, if you knew that there was nothing much wrong with you in the first place.

Yet for all his flatulence, there were elements of sense in Jung. Reading him is a waste of time, unless you are going to live several centuries at least; reading this biography is also unilluminating. I would recommend instead Anthony Storr's bracing little book *Jung* written in 1973, which in 100 pages distills what good sense and worthwhile ideas there were in Jung, and leaves the thousands of his pages of dross to molder where they belong, unread on library shelves.

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Writing for antiquity: the ironies of D. J. Enright

by Paul Dean

If the name and work of D. J. Enright, who died on New Year's Eve, 2002 at the age of eighty-two, are little known in the United States, that is not surprising; the same is true in his native England. The circumstances of his life and the cast of his mind kept him on the periphery of our cultural life, an old-style roving academic and social commentator reminiscent, in different ways, of William Empson and Richard Hoggart. His poetry, novels, and criticism fell into neglect and he seemed fated to be known mainly as a skilful anthologist. He cultivated a doggedly unfashionable persona and quoted with approval Charles Lamb's reaction to an editorial letter of rejection: "Damn the age! I will write for Antiquity." Then, late in life, he regained public attention with a trilogy of books whose subtitles indicate their resistance to classification: *Interplay: A Kind of Commonplace Book* (1995), *Play Resumed: A Journal* (1999), and the posthumously published *Injury Time: A Memoir* (2003). Part journal, part anthology, part essay, part newspaper scrapbook, part collection of aphorisms, with some poems thrown in too, their unity is one of tone and personality: the tone wry, ironical, guarded, with melancholy never far away and the shadow of Death looming with increasing menace over the last book; the personality complex, playful and somber at once, in the manner of Montaigne or Robert Burton, both of whom Enright admired. Their style is oblique, compact, often epigramatic, full of sudden shifts of subject or perspective.

All Enright's best prose was written in this condensed, episodic form, even his criticism; his most conventionally sustained book, *Shakespeare and the Students* (1970), is also his dullest. In *Play Resumed*, he quotes a comment by the philosopher Michael Tanner on the work of E. M. Cioran: "All good aphoristic writing is tiring to read, because one has to do most of the writer's work for him; he supplies a sentence, the serious reader turns it into a paragraph." "*Really* tiring?" Enright wonders. "More tiring than struggling through a paragraph, a page, and turning it into a sentence?"

Dennis John Enright was born, the son of a postman, in 1920 in Leamington, Warwickshire. After attending local schools he won a scholarship to Downing College, Cambridge. His birthplace is forever associated with faded gentility thanks to John Betjeman's poem "Death in Leamington," but Enright's upbringing was working class. In his autobiographical verse sequence *The Terrible Shears: Scenes from a Twenties Childhood* (1973), he recalls some characteristic scenes: the heap of coal at the back of the house (because "They wouldn't let us have a bath"), the head-lice rattling onto the paper during a school medical inspection, a baby sister who died in infancy, the constant specter of the workhouse, the dreary importunities of Church and Empire. Enright would never agree that talk of class was

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meaningless; he records the indignation of the wife of one of his teachers when he won his scholarship: "she stopped me in the street, to tell me . . ./ That Cambridge wasn't for the likes of me." "Her sentiments," he adds sardonically, "were precisely those of the/ Working class."

At Downing, Enright was taught by F. R. Leavis, but never became a Leavis clone as so many others did. This was partly because of his enthusiasm, which Leavis didn't share, for German literature; his first publications, in *Scrutiny*, were on Goethe, Rilke, and Mann, among others. Characteristically defying English literary prejudices, Enright was a lifelong passionate Germanist, making his own poetic version of the Faust story in *A Faust Book* (1979). (He married a Frenchwoman, however, and together they revised the standard English translation of Proust.) His penchant for aphorism puts one in mind of Schopenhauer or even of Wittgenstein. Nonetheless, in the end, he casually admitted that German literature lacked variety compared to English, and that the music of its poetry was apt to seem monotonous and banal in translation.

After graduating, Enright embarked on a peripatetic academic career which, between 1947 and 1969, took him to universities in Alexandria, Tokyo, Berlin (which, despite his Germanophilia, he disliked), Bangkok, and finally Singapore, where he spent ten years as a professor. The period from 1956 to 1967 is acerbically evoked in *Memoirs of a Mendicant Professor* (1969). This cosmopolitanism gave him an exceptionally broad range of cultural interests and sympathies, as well as bringing him into conflict with illiberal authoritarian regimes. His novel *Academic Year* (1955) paints a darkly comic picture of Alexandria, a mongrel city, "seedy and violent," in the last days of the reign of the corrupt King Farouk. Offense was taken in certain quarters and Enright's contract was not renewed.

The *Memoirs* catalogues a succession of undiplomatic incidents, embroiling Enright with the British Council (his nominal employer) and ambassadorial staff as well as insulted government officials. In Bangkok he and his wife were arbitrarily set upon by a gang of drunken policemen; he spent a night in a cell under guard, and was forced by the British Council representative to apologize to his assailants. His unembarrassed admission, on another occasion, that he had smoked opium was not well received either. His inaugural lecture at Singapore made criticisms of the reactionary cultural policies of the government, provoking a furious letter from the Minister of Culture denouncing him as a "mendicant," an "alien," a "beatnik," and a bird of passage, and threatening to expel him from the country if he interfered further in its internal affairs. In *Injury Time*, he notes that a proposal by a Singapore publisher to reprint the *Memoirs* was hastily withdrawn a week later. The book was still unacceptable after thirty years. "This is the nicest way," Enright observes, "of preserving an orderly, compliant, industrious and highly prosperous little country: a mild, bearable, ever-present fearfulness. Happy the land that doesn't feel the need for heroes."

By all accounts Enright was an excellent teacher, inspiring real affection in his pupils—the Thai students defended him against the Minister, a most unusual display of independence—and setting high professional standards for his colleagues. He left Bangkok, according to his colleague Paul Theroux, partly because "I've stopped learning anything from my students."[1] In the *Memoirs* he distinguishes between the teacher of literature, "a missionary" who "wants his pupils to be changed" by their studies, and the teacher of language, "a technician [. . .] concerned with words, but not with their meaning," who aims to make his students "more efficient members of a given society." Literature incites questioning by its very nature. English literature, specifically, in

1 Theroux is quoted from an interesting volume edited by Jacqueline Sims, *Life by Other Means: Essays on D. J. Enright* (Oxford, 1990). There is also a critical study by William Walsh, *D. J. Enright: Poet of Humanism* (Cambridge, 1974).

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its complexity, variety, and diversity, resists enlistment by dogmatists or tyrants, and so maintains the traditions of liberal humanism. A foreign student is brought up against modes of thinking which, however unfamiliar, will inoculate him or her against passive acceptance of conformity. "Fortunately literature tends to mean too much and too irresistibly to yield to the charms of meaninglessness, however ingenious."

It will come as no surprise, then, that Enright had no time for literary theory. Like its two predecessors, *Injury Time* is full of impatience with pseudo-academic nonsense. "Postmodernism," Enright says, "is the evacuation of absolutes and—not the loss (which would be noted)—the non-existence of meaning." When Catherine Belsey, in an interview published under the auspices of the British Council, declares that "we no longer ask, as our first question, how good a work is, but instead what it can tell us about the culture that produced it," Enright's response is unequivocal: "That's to say, literature doesn't matter." He doesn't spare his old employers, deploring their sponsorship of such "shameful, shameless, self-regarding tosh." This is not simply old-fogeyism. Enright's background gave him a far deeper understanding of the concept of culture than Belsey; he knew that no simple, dilettantish division can be made between the quality of a society and the quality of the literature which is both its consequence and its critique.

On his return to England in 1970, Enright worked briefly at Leeds University and for the magazine *Encounter* before joining the publishers Chatto and Windus in 1972, becoming a director in 1974. Being a decent man, he was depressed by much of the output of the firm. Among its authors was Iris Murdoch. Notoriously, she refused to allow her novels to be copy-edited (which explains a lot). When Enright pointed out that the accents were missing from some French words in a Murdoch typescript, he was told, as he puts it, that "this was sacred writ, all was meant." He quietly made the corrections anyway; "If I had transgressed, I could always blame it on the printers." In the late 1990s he had a painful experience of a publisher's fickleness himself when, without warning, Oxford University Press discontinued its poetry list, on which he figured. Enright's verdict on this, in *Injury Time*, is for him exceptionally angry: he indicts the directors of the Press of "ignorance, stupidity, hypocrisy, an open, possibly unprecedented contempt for a considerable body of their authors, and a general ineptitude beggaring description." It's the ex-publisher in him, as much as the author, one feels, who is so disgusted here. Happily, the Oxford poets were soon snapped up by the Carcanet Press.

Having retired from Chatto in 1982, Enright busied himself, first with the Proust revision, then with anthologies: *The Oxford Book of Death* (1983), *The Oxford Book of the Supernatural* (1994), *The Faber Book of Fevers and Frets* (1989). Enright's father had been a lapsed Catholic, his mother a Wesleyan Methodist; he felt enough residual loyalty to the latter to give it as his religion when he entered Egypt, only to have the secret police put a tail on him because they took "Wesleyan Methodist" to denote some variety of Judaism. Unlike William Empson, whose experiences as a teacher in the Far East only intensified his hatred of Christianity and his respect for Buddhism, Enright seems to have preserved a typically undogmatic curiosity about, and an amused affection for, the religion of his childhood.

In *Injury Time* he reminds trendy clerics that if they take Christ out of Christianity "what you are left with sounds much like inanity," and shakes his head over a news item in which David Beckham, detecting in himself "a definite sense of spirituality," announces that he wants his son "christened, but [I] don't know into what religion yet." He relishes the incident in a hospital admissions queue, when the woman in front of him is asked her religion, replies firmly "None," and sees this written down as "Nun." He cites approvingly C. H. Sisson's poem "Easter": "What is astonishing is that

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he came here at all,/ where no one ever came voluntarily before." He has some absorbing pages on the concept of the soul, as to which, exasperatingly, "you need to die to know for certain whether or not it lives." It must be immortal, he contends, because "just consider all the things that would have killed the soul stone-dead if it hadn't been." This wonderfully gnomic remark, whose degree of seriousness is impossible to determine, points up the recurring tension, in Enright, between commitment and detachment, participation and observation, warmth and chilliness.

All that adds up to a particularly rich form of irony, strongly reminiscent of E. M. Forster. A book of Enright's which I have not yet mentioned is *The Alluring Problem: An Essay on Irony* (1986). This proceeds, as usual, largely through brief studies of particular examples (Forster, oddly, not among them). Irony, Enright argues, works like a flash of lightning momentarily revealing a dark sky: "the mind retains the impression, and [. . .] the landscape is transformed, often for more than a moment." Irony "acknowledges what must be, contends against what should not and need not be, and intimates what conceivably could be." It is "a source of endurance and courage and even, in its oblique and tentative way, of hope." This makes irony akin to religion. It is emphatically unlike the irony of Goethe's Mephistopheles, "the spirit who always denies." In Enright's *Faust Book*, we note, Faust is saved at the end; the irony works against the Devil.

This distillation of irony, which, like Jacques's melancholy in *As You Like It*, is "compounded of many simples," having wisdom rather than knowledge as its end and sad mirth rather than superior wit as its medium, is, in my view, Enright's major claim on our attention. It is a tone of voice we now hear less and less, as those who lived sufficiently rich and complex lives to articulate it pass away. It is replaced in our world by sneering game-playing and the demonstration of intellectual conceit by the belittlement of others. Our postmodern, cheap irony, with no room for compassion, humility, or subtlety, is startlingly ill-equipped to cope with ambiguities, especially those of suffering or death.

Not so Enright's. Seven years before his death, he discovered that he had cancer. This began to loom in *Play Resumed*, where his hospital file became his "curriculum mortis." In *Injury Time* the darkness deepens, but the smile remains visible, as when Enright is confronted by the cheery greeting in a hospital, "WELCOME TO ACCIDENT AND EMERGENCY." We "might not really object to death," he suggests, "if it were not preceded by dying." When a cystoscopy fails to confirm the existence of a suspected growth, he attempts (unsuccessfully) to ameliorate the doctor's disappointment with "a joke about a sense of tumour." The most moving anecdote describes an orderly on Enright's ward, which also contained a distressed elderly man. The orderly would stand motionless in the middle of the room, saying and doing nothing, apparently purposelessly. Then: "Seen early one morning, the orderly, upright, stock-still, expressionless, hugging the sick old man, quiet now, close to his chest, not a word passing between them. So that was what he was for." Enright doesn't note—perhaps he thinks it's too obvious—the classic Enrightian verbal quibble: the *orderly*.

The discomforts and humiliations of old age, whether or not lived out through disease, are unsparingly chronicled. They are set in English society at the turn of the millennium, a society which, quite suddenly, it seems, has collectively lost its traditional virtues of decency, dignity, restraint, and stoicism, which Enright, at least, still embodies. ("A new year's wish: that one could read the newspaper without wanting to throw up.") Despite isolated instances of goodness, like that noted above, vulgarity, selfishness, ignorance, and contempt prevail. A lonely hearts advertisement begins "MR DARCY SEEKS ELIZABETH"; a mail order catalogue offers "calvary twill trousers" and another—aimed at the Christmas market—a "Bog Monster" which will manifest itself "in all its hideous glory" when the lavatory seat

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to whose underside it is attached is lifted by the unsuspecting user; a GCSE candidate asserts that Shakespeare's plays are written in "Islamic pentameters"; police in Manchester arrive hours too late in response to information that a bookmaker's is being burgled, explaining that they had been "looking for a place that made books"; a review hails Thomas Harris's *Hannibal* as "The most significant sequel since *Paradise Regained*"; the BBC labels a new sitcom "reassuringly offensive." "The inglorious present!" Enright muses. "It's difficult not to feel anger. But keep Ulrich's thought [from Robert Musil's novel *The Man Without Qualities*] in mind: that you can't be angry with your own time without damage to yourself."

There is always—and this marks another difference between Enright's irony and that of our time—some positive corrective to the appalling spectacle of a world embracing self-destruction. Towards the close of *Injury Time* we find him accompanying his wife to the hospital where she, for a change, is the patient. Her endoscopy proves negative, but Enright, worn out with waiting in the heat, becomes dizzy and has to be put in a wheelchair. The taxi-driver who takes them home is "sweet-natured and kind-hearted, above and beyond the call of duty," refusing to accept a tip. "This was an avatar," Enright concludes, "as if some aspect of deity had chosen that moment and that place to descend among us."

Apart from the kind of irony I have described there is, of course, the simpler kind disclosed in the pun, a device to which Enright confesses himself addicted. Much of the material in the final trilogy is straightforwardly funny and it would be a distortion to claim otherwise. He loved the *ben trovato*: the advertisement for a chef which specified "No time wasters or pre-Madonnas" (surely the *ne plus ultra* of Post-modernism!) or, most hysterical of all, the spell-checker which refused to accept a journalist's attempt to quote the opening sentence of *Moby Dick*, suggesting as an alternative "Call me Fishmeal."

Yet even these are not mere jokes. They attract Enright's attention because of the sudden surrealist glimpses they afford into new, bizarre, perhaps illuminating ways of looking at the world. His own poems, at their best, display a similar interest: "Blue Umbrellas," for instance, with its contrast between the child's perception of "The thing that makes a blue umbrella with its tail" and the adult's stale awareness that this is a peacock; or "Entertaining Women" in which a man at a Japanese nightclub mishears a word and refuses a girl's offer to make coffee because it will keep him awake; later he realises the word had not been "coffee" but "love"—"The thought kept him awake"; or "The Stations of King's Cross" in which a ride on the London Underground becomes a *via dolorosa* ("At Hammersmith the nails/ At Green Park the tree").

Enright always regarded himself primarily as a poet, but, despite the five hundred pages of his collected volume, it's hard to agree. His verse shares the virtues of his prose—but this somehow seems to incapacitate it from making an impact; the voice is too quiet, the rhythms too elusive. The poetry is plainly that of a decent man: but decency is not enough. Enright, then, is not a major poet, or a major critic either, though he rarely writes a dull or obscure sentence, is voluminously but unostentatiously read, and has many insights to offer. Too rational to be a mystic, yet too visionary to be a pragmatist, he is best read in small doses and then mulled over, like a teacher of the eastern rather than the western tradition. To describe him as a "character" is unjust if it suggests an eccentric or a poseur, but ultimately he may be more important for the kind of person he was than for what he wrote. His kind of Englishness is fast becoming extinct: it is kindly, sensitive, scrupulous, puckish, beady-eyed, poised, and full of spiritual generosity. We should heed such people while we can, before the whistle is blown on our own injury time.

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New poems
by James Aitchison & Colette Inez

Wind, Stars, Fever: Letters From Keats

Notwithstanding your Happiness and your recommendation I hope I shall never marry. [. . .] The roaring of the wind is my wife, and the Stars through the window pane are my Children.
—To George and Georgiana Keats, October 1818

Wind

He's married to an autumn wind that roars
through clashing branches of the sycamores
and scatters their last leaves across the sky.
And like the wind among the sycamore boughs,
a roaring wife can strain a husband's vows
to breaking point. But every wind will die
away. When he's delivered from the storm
the poet is at liberty to form
new unions that seem brief and yet defy
the centuries; for when a poet binds
himself in words he also binds our minds
to his. And he is freely bound to try
wife after wife: a man who has been kissed
by poetry is a constant bigamist.

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Stars

Except in that near-equinoctial light
of an autumn evening or late afternoon
when we might see the zodiacal arc
of stars and planets, sun and crescent moon,
we cannot see the stars until the night
is all around us and the skies are dark.

Children, Keats called them, because their domain
was also his: he stared at the night skies
and found a way of looking through the pane
as if the universe flowed from his eyes.
We come from stardust; stardust's in our veins
and in the microcosm of our brain.

And when a star burns out it shines for years,
light-years, before its starlight disappears.

Fever

I want to compose without this fever. I hope one day I shall.
—To George and Georgiana Keats, September 1819

Fever was fervour. It was no disease
of mind but that condition—sure, perplexed—
of falling unconditionally in love
day after day with poems he had to write.
He was be-mused, and nothing can appease
a poet's need, not this poem or the next
or next again. He knew he had to prove
his love by ordeal, imagination's white
hot fire. But could he by time's slow degrees
have cooled his fever and kept his intellect's
pure flame intact? Whatever power drove
his fevered mind to visionary sight—
a power the other fever couldn't sieze—
is still in force. We read him by its light.

—James Aitchison

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Forest Sculpture

(Goose Creek, S.C.)

Horns locked into blue air, head posed to tear
a patch of forest out of its repose,
this form was hurled down by Capricorn

to match a remembered self.
Earth reshaped what it saw—fire gods hardened
the surface to a dark shine, spirits of the woods

added their whim of tree stump and branch.
Butting faint starlight above the corridor
of trees, now Capricorn barely knows

its analogue whose glance seems to admonish us,
and like a divinity looks heavenward—
we turn our backs on the earth

that shaped us, the sky of our minds
lighting the forest.

—*Colette Inez*

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Theater

Recent evasive events

by Mark Steyn

On the evening of September 11, 2001, Rosemary Righter, the senior leader writer ("leader" is British for "editorial") at *The Times* of London, was due at a dinner party. She arrived late, and found the tone, after a hard day at the office, oddly smug and triumphalist. Leaving early, she gave a lift to another guest. "Rosemary," he said, "isn't it *marvelous* to think that the arrogant bloody Americans have finally got it in the neck?" Involuntarily, she braked. Hard. Though not hard enough to precipitate him through the windshield, sadly.

Miss Righter was one of the first to experience an admittedly minor consequence of September 11 but nonetheless a widespread phenomenon: dinner party dislocation. Every few weeks in the British press, you could read some columnist or other announcing that he could no longer bear the company of his friends: progressive lefties bemoaning the way old friends had gone over to the side of the Pentagon warhawks; old-school Marxists who'd campaigned for unilateral nuclear disarmament outside U.S. military bases twenty years ago disgusted at the way their pals were now defending regimes that brutalized women and executed homosexuals. I found myself estranged from many friends in London, including most of my colleagues at *The Spectator*, wary small-c conservatives for whom the Atlantic alliance has always been a mixed blessing and who couldn't help feeling, faced with all this "axis of evil" business, that maybe in his frightfully vulgar way Osama had a point—the issue was America, nothing else.

In London, I gave up accepting dinner invitations for a while. It was too exhausting. If you attempted to rebut the usual sneers at Bush and Rumsfeld—i.e., if you attempted to engage them on the specifics—they simply moved on to more generalized sneers, about the ghastly emotionalism of the Yanks, not to mention their aesthetically offensive obesity. "Night after night," wrote Salman Rushdie in *The New York Times*, "I have found myself listening to Londoners' diatribes against the sheer weirdness of the American citizenry."

Mr. Rushdie can surely be forgiven his sympathy for the arrogant bloody Americans: after all, the Islamists did to New York and the Pentagon what they wanted to do to him. But even that didn't excuse his obsessiveness. I was at a dinner party in London a few months back where someone bemoaned "how boring" Salman had become about all this "terrorism rubbish." I was indignant and about to regale them with a heartrending encounter I'd had with one of Saddam's victims in Ramadi earlier this year. But then I remembered the end of Evelyn Waugh's *Black Mischief*, when Basil returns to London after his adventures in Africa:

> "I suppose you ran the whole country," says Sonia.
>
> "As a matter of fact, I did."

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> "Darling, I just don't want to hear about it, d'you mind? I'm sure it's all very fine and grand, but it doesn't make much sense to a stay-at-home like me. Write a book about it, sweety. Then we can buy it and leave it about where you'll see and then you'll think we know."

It's not just who's pro-war and who's anti-war: in London and even more so in Paris and Berlin and Rome, there's a third group fighting vainly the old ennui—they can't understand why chaps who used to be such amusing company are suddenly so bloody primal all the time. Not long ago I found myself sitting next to a cool Nordic blonde who turned out to be the Swedish Foreign Minister, Anna Lindh. Ms. Lindh wanted to know why the Americans present were so "hung up" on war and terror. It was absurd and prevented any normal conversation on the real issues facing the world—welfare, health care, etc. We agreed to disagree. I flew on to Iraq and had a grand old time in the Sunni Triangle. Ms. Lindh flew back to Stockholm and was stabbed to death in a department store by an anti-Euro fanatic.

Which brings me, admittedly in a roundabout way, to *Omnium Gatherum* at the Variety Arts Theatre. You wait ages for a 9/11 play and then nine come along in eleven days, give or take. Jonathan Bell's *Portraits* spluttered to the end of a two-week run at the Union Square. A series of monologues by various characters connected tangentially to the day, it felt dated both in form and content, straining for uplift and significance in the way that some of the semi-anniversary TV tributes of March 2002 did. Craig Wright's *Recent Tragic Events* at Playwrights Horizons had two good things going for it: *Austin Powers* babe Heather Graham and the opportunity to see the novelist Joyce Carol Oates played by a sock puppet, a transformation one would not be averse to seeing rendered permanent. Alas, too often it's Miss Graham who might as well be a sock puppet. The time and place is Minneapolis on September 12, and Miss Graham decides to go ahead with a blind date, even though her sister is among the missing. Or might be. It starts as soap and tries to turn into opera, as Wright burdens what's barely a sitcom with the weight of eternity.

Next to both these plays, *Omnium Gatherum* sounded as if it had got it right. Theresa Rebeck is the author of *Bad Dates* and other off-Broadway plays and Alexandra Gersten-Vassilaros has written *My Thing of Love*, but this is their first work together and it began out of conversations they had on the day itself. And at first glance it seems like they've found exactly the right form: a dinner party. This is a well-worn theatrical sub-genre for American authors from George S. Kaufman and Edna Ferber to A. R. Gurney and E. L. Doctorow. But the twist of 9/11 ought surely to be able to breathe new life into it. After all, the dinner party is, for most middle-class westerners in this age of volunteer militaries, as near as they get to the battlefield. And, while most dinner-party conversation operates within long-understood social constraints, September 11 happened too suddenly to be absorbed into the labyrinthine niceties that attend all discussion of race and other issues.

Omnium Gatherum is staged by Will Frears on a David Rockwell set whose chilly ostentation is finely calibrated: mahogany panels rise to the skies and an icy chandelier descends. Outside, helicopters whirr overhead, sometimes so closely the guests flinch and duck. For the guests, it's not so much a reminder of the fragility of life as an unwelcome distraction from shallow self-absorbed banter. Casting a dinner-party drama is not quite the same as casting a dinner party: you wouldn't consciously seek out this much conflict, eight points of view that are bound to clash quite so crudely. The two authors of *Omnium Gatherum* have put their heads together and come up with an entire cast of Joyce Carol Oates sock puppets: left-wing controversialist, right-wing spy novelist, Arab intellectual, professional lifestyle guru, neurotic vegan, African-American authoress. Everybody comes with their own -ism:

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vegetarianism, feminism, multiculturalism, imperialism, racism. Fine, up to a point. But then the Misses Rebeck and Gersten-Vassilaros decide to gild the lily and make their dinner party a *comédie à clef*. Terrence, the leftie Cambridge-educated drunk controversialist, is a thinly-disguised Christopher Hitchens, Suzie the professional lifestylist is Martha Stewart, Roger the thriller writer is Tom Clancy, and Khalid the Palestinian intellectual is Edward Said, who helpfully died on the day of the play's opening, like Gower Champion with *42nd Street*.

This is surely short-changing both the audience and us. For a start, these are the sort of people whom TV producers book for talk-show shouting matches: we expect Christopher Hitchens to mix it up, and, when he does so, it seems like just another *Crossfire* routine rather than a straining of social relationships. That's the most basic problem: that the event seems more like cable-news polemical tennis with better refreshments than any real dinner party. Secondly, Martha—or a crude parody of the TV Martha—is too obvious and too familiar: Suzie has prepared a feast of globalization, from the Belgian endive and Anjou pear salad with toasted walnuts to the "freshly-blessed lamb . . . a dish from the south of Pakistan, a favourite among moderate Shiites." And, insofar as there's a point to the play's relish of every ingredient, it seems to be that Suzie has a tremendous appetite for things from other places but absolutely no interest in the people therefrom. That's not really a big enough idea to hang an evening on.

If that's meant to be an indictment of globalization or consumerism, it seems to me it goes double for multiculturalism. In the days after September 11, I ran into no end of college students eager to lecture me on the "root causes"—poverty breeds despair, despair breeds anger, anger breeds terrorism, terrorism breeds generalizations—yet unable to name the capital of Saudi Arabia or find Afghanistan on a map.

From its rather hackneyed premise, the play proceeds in predictable directions. In one sense, that has a kind of logic, if not a dramatically compelling one. When he's caught by surprise, an opinion-former retreats to his tropes, however lame or inadequate to the moment: thus, for the campus left, 9/11 was all about Vietnam, or racism, or American imperialism; for less antiquated lefties, it was some kind of payback for the Florida recount or part of Halliburton's long-term growth strategy; for the protesters in the street, it was yet another casualty of globalization, or, alternatively, yet another bogus excuse not to free Mumia; for Carl Russell of Bethel, Vermont, writing to my local paper in late September, it was a spasm of anger arising from bad karma brought about by "global warming, pollution, soil depletion," the last of which has the merit of being a literal root cause or lack thereof.

At *Omnium Gatherum*, many of the preceding get batted about, brought up and swatted aside, though always within the cautious bounds of political discourse in the arts. If the purpose of the play is that everybody lets rip, then you have to be an equal-opportunity offender. More importantly, the authors miss the real dinner-party fall-out from 9/11, which is that it's fractured traditional political fault lines, broken the oldest of alliances. For some on both left and right, it was so awesome an event it was no longer possible to retreat to your tropes: they seemed insufficient to the occasion, and more so as the months went by. These days Christopher Hitchens has more in common with me than with his old friend Edward Said. But the authors take nothing from Hitchens except his external traits—booze and Britishness—and ignore all the more interesting contradictions. If Hitchens ever sees Dean Nolen's pale Xerox of him, he's unlikely to lose any sleep over it.

Likewise, Edward Said, played by Edward A. Hajj. You don't have to regard him, as I do, as an intellectual fraud and a phoney who justified the suppression of his privileged upbringing and the invention of an alternative childhood wrecked by Zionists and imperialists by offering the ingenious

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explanation that, as a Palestinian, he paradoxically felt victimized by his lack of victimization. If I were writing a play with Said among the *dramatis personae*, he would be a great comic figure. In Hitchens' hands, he would be a tragic figure. But either would be more interesting than what happens here: as the token ethnic in the cast, he's handled with kid gloves. Though he's something of a pedant, he nevertheless remains the group's conscience. He is the only character allowed his dignity, and his bon mots, however clunky, are intended to be sincere: "So we are, then, all of us seeking, let's say, a false oneness to pull us through the demanding duality of life."

Is that meant to be satirical? If so, it's outpaced by the real words of the real Said, a man who in the hours before the killers struck the World Trade Center dismissed "the west" and "democracy" and their bogey men, "rogue states" and "terrorism," as "counterfeit" "confections" designed to "create consent and tacit approval." This, in its dark timeliness, is rather funnier than anything Khalid says here. Same with Suzie-Martha. I did some Thanksgiving and Christmas shows with Martha Stewart for the BBC years ago, and I learned early on there's a heavy degree of self-satire about her. I'd also say that, at least in private, she's a woman of very robust views, and much livelier company than the authoritarian ditz on stage at the Variety Arts. When Suzie says things like "I'm aware of my wealth. I used to be middle class. I know how that feels," you're meant to hear her unawareness of her own snobbery. But she's so thinly drawn, you don't. These people never rise above their designated emblematic function. The great issues of our time fly across the table in ninety-second soundbites and are never heard of again. Khalid is droning on about the global economy when Suzie interrupts to demand of the African-American authoress, "Love your jacket. Is that Donna?"

What exactly is the joke here? That shallowness is a refuge? That the planet's only hyperpower wants to make the world safe for meaningless self-gratification? The more the play goes on—and, unlike most dinner parties, it's only ninety minutes—the more you feel it's as much a symptom of shallowness and emptiness as anything it satirizes. By far the most mystifying guests are the fireman and the terrorist. The latter, Mohammed, attempts to attack his fellow Arab and, in an Upper East Side reductio of Flight 93, his fellow diners are obliged to wrestle him into submission. But it's not so very fanciful to think of Edward Said or even Martha Stewart being in the same room as a terrorist: the former was, after all, an apologist for terrorists and he mixed in circles where he came close enough to see what he was apologizing for; and, as we've learned, though the White House and State Department prefer not to dwell on it, the wife of the longtime Saudi Ambassador in Washington was "inadvertently" funneling money to the 9/11 terrorists, and a current Saudi cabinet minister, entirely by coincidence of course, spent the night of September 10 in the same hotel as some of them. The middle-class Saudi terrorists would not be so out of place at a dinner party of western "intellectuals."

But a fireman?

I think he's meant to be symbolic. If he's not meant to be the Fire Department in general, he's certainly not very good at being any fireman in particular. Jeff seems to be the hostess's trophy lug: a kind of bluecollar centerpiece. He's the prize catch until Mohammed the terrorist gets served up with the petit fours. By this time we've learned that the dinner party is taking place in hell—*Omnium Gatherum* is defined here as "a collection of peculiar souls," emphasis on "souls." And so, having failed to match Kaufman and Ferber, the dramatists set off in pursuit of Buñuel and Sartre, just as fruitlessly. The guests dance, in mutual isolation, to Sinatra: "I've Got The World On A String/ Sitting on a rainbow." Which is easy for Frank to say. The authors seem to be suggesting that the breeziness is more like carelessness—that America has the world on a string and doesn't realize how easily the string could

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break and spiral off into catastrophe. Of course, they may be saying something else entirely. From a strictly unscientific survey, I'd say theatergoers appeared to enjoy "the bit where they dance to that Sinatra record" without having a clue what's going on. And that's it, really: you come out remembering not a play, not any ideas, not any great characters, just the odd moment, a line here, a line there, some of them nearly as good as the real Hitchens or Said or Martha would have said. The meal looks good and the actors tuck in as if this'll be their last chance to eat in quite a while. But food for thought? Not a nibble.

Omnium Gatherum at least passes the time. Craig Wilson's *Recent Tragic Events* has a great title and not a clue what to do with it. Strung around Heather Graham and her blind date, it's structured like a bad sitcom, complete with interruptions from a nosy neighbor. I thought at first this was something to do with it being set in Minneapolis: Miss Graham was meant to be Mary Tyler Moore, and the neighbor was Phyllis. I could have gone along with that, taken to its logical conclusion: a sombre post-9/11 "I Love Lucy" in which Ricky accidentally gets incarcerated by John Ashcroft, etc. But Wilson evidently is only in sitcom mode by accident, so to show he's a cut above those TV types we crank into absurdist gear with a visit from the Joyce Carol Oates sock puppet, and then into half-hearted melodrama over the missing sister, and then an *Our Town* stage manager issues disembodied instructions for the final scene, and the set flies away to leave only a *Carousel*-style starry night sky. Whatever's going on, it sure sounds important.

Two years ago, in the wake of September 11, I took a more or less random tour of current theatrical offerings. None was "about" 9/11, but from Ionesco to *The Music Man* to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* everything seemed germane in some respect to what had just happened a few blocks south. Since then, our playwrights have had plenty of time to come up with a way to address the subject explicitly and have fallen embarrassingly short. Obviously, there's an opportunity here. Whoever hits the right note on 9/11 will clean up. None of these three works smells like a money play, but, by the same token, they all seem vaguely tentative and unfelt. Someone said to me after *Recent Tragic Events* that what was needed was Larry Kramer. But the difference is that Kramer was mad as hell about AIDS—everyone he knew was dying, nobody in the government was paying him any attention—and, for good or ill, his work reflected that sense of deep engagement. Responses to September 11 of equivalent intensity have come from various figures—the corpulent anti-corporatist Michael Moore, on the one hand, or, on the other, the kick-ass country singer Toby Keith. But the authors of these plays either lack the courage of their own convictions, or don't have any convictions in the first place.

That wonderful title of Craig Wilson's sums it up: *Recent Tragic Events*. I first heard the phrase round about September 14 on a radio station in New Hampshire: an announcer explained that "due to the recent tragic events in New York and Washington" some promotion or other would not now take place. The expression is an evasion, the reflexive posture of a culture so squeamish that words like "attack" and "atrocity" and "slaughter" are too—perish the thought—judgmental. Even in the moment, there was no agreement on what it was or what it meant or whether we should be angry and righteous or weepy and mopey. And as time passes there's less and less agreement. It's fine if you're Toby Keith and you're a country singer. But it's all more problematic if you're an off-Broadway playwright and you've got to run the gauntlet of producers, actors, and drama critics. If they ever publish an anthology of 9/11 plays, they should call it *Recent Tragic Events*—a perfectly empty euphemism for a theater that can't get beyond the evasions and work out what it feels, if anything, about the great gaping hole in the heart of its own backyard.

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Art

The modernism of El Greco

by Karen Wilkin

"The most modern of Old Masters" declares a text panel at the beginning of this fall's stunning El Greco retrospective at the Metropolitan. Hyperbole, maybe, but it's easy to agree when we become engaged by this enigmatic artist's moody, ecstatic devotional paintings, losing ourselves in eye-popping color and crackling tonal shifts, brittle planes and unstable spaces or savoring the expressive exaggerations of confrontational portraits, instead of deciphering iconography or wondering about the identity of the sitters. No matter how much we know about the historical context of these pictures, no matter how firm a grip we have on the permutations of painting in the late sixteenth century, it can be difficult to see El Greco's pictures solely as products of their own time. The passionate touch (especially in the late work), the moonstruck brights and bottomless blacks, the agitated drawing, and above all, the immediacy, intensity, and unignorable individuality of his work can seem more the result of a modern desire for self-expression than a response to Counter Reformation requirements for evoking religious fervor.

It's possible that El Greco's atemporal modernity is particularly conspicuous at the moment because of the timing of the Metropolitan's exhibition,[1] which arrived hard on the heels of MOMA's Max Beckmann retrospective. With the Beckmann show fresh in one's mind, it is difficult to look at El Greco's mature work and not think about the curious likenesses between the efforts of these ostensibly very different painters: one an introspective twentieth-century Northerner bent on embodying private myths and inner angst in images intended to please only himself; the other a suave inhabitant of the sixteenth-century Mediterranean world, a maker of religious images, to order, according to agreed-upon conventions of decorum.

Why consider them together at all? Beckmann didn't pay particular attention to El Greco, although he did cite as important sources Titian and Tintoretto, who were among El Greco's most potent influences. True, there's the all-stops-out energy common to both painters' work, but there's much more. Both El Greco and Beckmann learned enormously from the most adventurous, inventive artists of their day (who happened to come from countries not their own) and synthesized what they learned into compelling, idiosyncratic work so personal that it makes questions of influence interesting, but ultimately irrelevant. Both were masters of staging disquieting, some-

1 "El Greco" opened at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, on October 7, 2003 and remains on view through January 11, 2004. The exhibition will be on view at The National Gallery, London, from February 11 through May 23, 2004. A catalogue of the exhibition has been published by The National Gallery, London, and is distributed by Yale University Press (320 pages, $65).

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times hard-to-follow dramas. Both relied on a palette of heightened, abrasive color, and on exaggerated tonal contrasts, tense drawing, and warped spaces to intensify the emotional resonance of their works. The lean, sharply modeled, struggling figures of El Greco's late, eerie masterpiece *Laocoön* (early 1610s, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC) would look right at home in one of Beckmann's spot-lit sideshows, while one of the most poignant works at the Met, a melancholy "imaginary portrait" of Saint Louis and a young page, from the 1590s, in the collection of the Louvre, seems to anticipate uncannily the player kings and fisher kings of Beckmann's obscure narratives.

Whatever the significance (if any) of these odd similarities, they serve to call attention to one important fact: that even absent the proximity of the Beckmann show it is all but impossible for modern-day viewers to avoid filtering our perceptions of El Greco through our accumulated experience of modernist art. We retroactively interpret his prismatic planes of sky and cloth, his origami spaces, and angular folds of shimmering silk in terms of Cubism. We think about the flame-like contours and elongated limbs of his figures in relation to Expressionism. The dynamic, disjunctive play of dark and light, brilliant chroma, and velvety blackness across the surface of his largest, most complex pictures begs to be seen as prefiguring all-over abstraction. These involuntary anachronistic readings, while admittedly questionable—like the comparison between El Greco and Beckmann—aren't complete misrepresentations. Three of the giants of modernist painting—Cézanne, Picasso, and Pollock—all found El Greco's work provocative and stimulating, so much so that it is not an overstatement to say that the work of all three might have been very different if it hadn't been for their admiration for their sixteenth-century ancestor. The feverish tonal contrasts and even more feverish mood of Cézanne's early allegories, religious scenes, and orgies owe a great deal to El Greco's example, in general, and Picasso's debt to two celebrated paintings, in particular, is well known. The stacked composition, the rows of packed figures, and the weird, accordion-pleated space of an uncanny masterpiece, *The Burial of Count Orgaz* (1586–1588, Parish Church of San Tomé, Toledo; unfortunately not in the Metropolitan's show) resonate in many of Picasso's early works, while the equally uncanny, astonishing *Opening of the Fifth Seal (The Vision of St. John)* (1608–1614, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) is acknowledged as crucial to the gestation of *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*. Picasso commented more than once on his interest in El Greco, and since he saw *The Opening of the Fifth Seal* often in the Paris collection of his fellow Spaniard, the painter Ignacio Zualoga, it is more than probable that the picture's frieze of nervously modeled nudes, its staccato folds of drapery, and its irrational spaces served as a blueprint for the spatial liberties of *Les Demoiselles*—which is not to discount the importance of Cézanne's bathers, African sculpture, or Iberian funerary monuments in the complicated evolution of Picasso's purposefully incoherent masterwork. In more general ways, El Greco's flame-stitched skies illuminate Pollock's earliest figurative works. It can be argued that their rhythms, expansiveness, and drama persist throughout all of Pollock's work, including his poured pictures. (To underscore the point, the Met has placed on view some of Pollock's sketchbooks with laborious drawings after El Greco figures.)

If El Greco's connections with modernism are well-documented, no one has yet, as far as I know, categorized him as a postmodernist *avant la lettre*, although there has been discussion of how the deliberately deracinated painter was affected by his nearly life-long status as outsider and his experience of what would now be called multiculturalism. Born to a Greek family in 1541 in the Venetian outpost of Crete, then known as Candia, and trained as an icon painter, Domenikos Theotokopoulos moved

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in 1567 to Venice, where he became known as "a disciple of Titian." By the end of 1570, he was in Rome, where he spent the next five or six years, registering as a member of the artists' Guild of San Luca as "Domenico Greco"—not surprisingly, since anyone who has ever dealt with Italian officialdom can easily imagine a sixteenth-century Italian *notaio* throwing up his hands in despair at hearing a difficult foreign name. By 1576, "El Greco" was in Spain, hoping, it seems, for a post at the royal court in Madrid, but his work apparently proved too eccentric for the rigidly orthodox royals of the period. Settling permanently in the university city of Toledo, he quickly became a major presence among its intellectuals, entrusted with countless important commissions and engaged in endless litigation about payments owed, taxes, and the like, until his death in 1614. John H. Elliot's essay "El Greco's Mediterranean: The Encounter of Civilizations" in the exhibition catalogue describes the intertwinings and oppositions of cultures—Greek East and Latin West, Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, Catholicism and Protestantism—that colored the painter's world during this personal odyssey from the Eastern end of the Mediterranean to its Western limits.

It's all fascinating and helps to alert us to the complex web of political and social influences of the period, but it doesn't explain the strange originality of El Greco's work. Neither does the most exhaustive itemizing of the equally complex web of artistic influences to which the peripatetic painter was exposed, especially during his formative years. It is possible to find traces of the elongations and ritualized poses of late Byzantine icons in El Greco's work, as well as echoes of the expressive brushwork of late Titian, the dizzy perspectives and dramatic lighting of Venetian painting of the generation after Titian, the theatrical gestures and wrenched postures, elastic space, and the zoom-lens alterations of scale of Mannerism, and more—evidence of everything that El Greco encountered and devoured, sometimes whole (as in his verbatim quotations of figures and poses from the work of artists he admired, especially in his earlier work), and finally digested thoroughly. But none of this really accounts for the peculiar power and mystery of his best work. It's easier to explain why El Greco's unsuccessful works remain inert, or become too wispy and stylish, or venture into the realm of the histrionic, complete with upraised eyes with glittering highlights. None of that is surprising, given his practice of cranking out multiple versions of his most sought-after compositions, like all successful masters of his day, and his need to satisfy the requirements of church patrons eager for devotional images seductive enough to withstand the allure of Protestantism—without, of course, provoking idolatry.

At the Met, we can think about all of this, and more, thanks to a remarkable selection that spans El Greco's entire career, from icons painted before the young Domenikos Theotokopoulos left Crete for Venice to an enormous *Adoration of the Shepherds* (1612–1614, Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid) from the last years of the artist's life. Most of the works on view give us El Greco at his best—there are exceptions, but only a few. He emerges as a distinct individual, but at the same time, if we can stop looking at him as a proto-Romantic or proto-Expressionist or proto-Cubist, the Met's selections also keep reminding us of the many sources from which he forged his unmistakable approach.

The icons with which the exhibition begins are unexceptional, even a little crude, but they are living evidence of the tradition in which the young Theotokopoulos was trained. It's not difficult to see the origins of the flattened spaces, slender proportions, and exaggerated poses of El Greco's mature style in the rigidly arranged, ritualized figures of a panel of the Dormition of the Virgin or to find precedents for his crisp, light-struck drapery in the zigzagging gold highlights of their robes. Yet the next galleries, which assemble works from "Do-

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menico Greco's" years in Italy, bear witness to other, more potent, influences. A small selection of early variations on *The Purification of the Temple*, a recurrent theme throughout El Greco's career, allows us to watch the young painter working to assimilate the innovations of his Venetian colleagues. His admiration for Titian and his disciples, especially Tintoretto and Jacopo Bassano, is palpable in these ambitious but not quite resolved pictures. Figure types, postures, and gestures all echo Tintoretto's theatrical conceptions, as do dramatic architectural perspectives and streetscapes, and telling contrasts of empty space and jostling crowds. But for all the appeal of these interesting pictures (which were recently seen as a group in an edifying mini-exhibition at the Frick), there is also something a little off about them. Some versions, for example, include a Titian-esque blonde reclining in the foreground, improbably oblivious to the riot around her, resting a massive arm on a cage of sacrificial doves; the strangely swollen limb appears to be at least as long as her extended, boneless leg. Yet the "Cubist" interlocking of struggling figures in these pictures both points back to the crowded icons and prefigures the expressive groupings of El Greco's later work; part of the excitement of the various versions of the Purification resides in the lively oppositions of—say—the man bending forward, crushed into the corner, with the man with an upraised arm straddling the collapsed woman who echoes and reverses his pose, with the violently scourging Christ, and so on. (That many of these figures and poses reappear in various arrangements throughout El Greco's work is simply evidence of thrifty recycling, an efficient practice for a master of the period working to keep up with demand.)

A trio of Italian works, this time secular pictures painted at intervals between the early 1570s and late 1580s or early 1590s, emphasizes light at the expense of almost everything else. The three pictures include a brushy, naturalistic "close up" of a boy blowing on an ember and two increasingly stylized versions of an impenetrable allegory involving a similar boy lighting a candle, a silky ape, and a ferret-faced "fool" with an overbite. The slightly cartoon-like depictions of the characters in the two versions of the "fábula" are atypical, as is the carefully observed naturalism of the boy with the ember, but together, the group underscores how important cinematic lighting and unexpected viewpoints will be to El Greco's later work. Other Italian period paintings make his interest in Mannerist artists such as Il Parmigianino or Baroccio unequivocal, while his avowed dislike of Michelangelo is challenged by the abundant evidence of the sculptor/painter/poet's influence on El Greco's muscular, athletic, albeit elongated nudes, from the Roman years on.

The painter's arrival in Spain is signaled by a giddy *Adoration of the Name of Jesus* (*c.* 1577–1579, Monasterio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial), believed to be a bid for a position of court painter to Philip II, who appears in the picture. It's possible to unravel the complex theological and iconographical references with which this peculiar, engaging, jam-packed picture is loaded—there's an informative catalogue entry that explains just about everything, including who is who—but the real power of the painting resides in the way El Greco has turned a continuous surface into a palimpsest of shifting spaces. Up, down, in, out, near, far, and very far are all represented, not seamlessly—quite the opposite, in fact—but with odd conviction. The viewer is kept off balance. It's the first time in the exhibition that we encounter something that will become a hallmark of El Greco's most compelling works: he makes us unable to locate ourselves in relation to the picture, so that, by implication, we enter some kind of transcendent state in which we become pure observers, free of corporeal constraints. Here, this sense of illogic and disorientation is intensified by downright bizarre color; a spill of chalky tangerine which leaps forward to the eye, is, in fact, justified as the fiery abyss of Hell, an ambiguous vaulted pit

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populated by tiny figures whose size identifies this radiant, expanding zone as the most distant part of the picture. Here space, like light, far from being descriptive or naturalistic, verges on the psychological. No wonder we persist in seeing El Greco as a modern trapped in an earlier period, despite such evidence to the contrary as the saccharine devotional pictures made not long after the painter's arrival in Spain, half-length saints most notable for sappy expressions and up-cast eyes moist with piety.

The last sections of the show are the most absorbing. The array of important, often very large, multi-figure altarpieces and striking full length images of saints is impressive, but the gallery of portraits and a small room of half-length apostles from the Spanish years, mostly disciplined likenesses of severe, bearded men, set against straightforward, minimal backgrounds, are just as impressive. Moreover, the sobriety of the pictures in these sections is a welcome antidote to the extravagance of busy altarpieces whose eccentric spaces and improbable figure relationships demand a great deal of the viewer. ("Extravagant" was apparently a word applied to El Greco in his lifetime, not intended as praise.) Which is not to say that the best of the most overtly spectacular works in the show are not immensely rewarding. The Prado's glorious *Resurrection* (late 1590s), for example, which reprises some of the gestures from the early versions of *The Purification of the Temple*, is a *tour de force* of tumbling figures whose unstable scales and splayed and folded limbs diagram an incomprehensible but thrilling space; the tall, narrow proportions of the canvas intensify the impact of the tangled bodies by seeming to squeeze them toward us.

Among the portraits, wildly uneven quality and wildly different approaches—varying degrees of naturalism, a range of touches, variables in modeling—are explained, at least in part, by a selection that includes works from the late 1570s to the painter's last years, as well as by occasional doubts about attribution. But we are also told that these differences reflect El Greco's responses to different individuals, a notion inextricably bound up with a modernist conception of self-expression that is a little difficult to accept. None of this matters in the presence of the best portraits, which are among the high points of this well chosen show: the Prado's head of an elegant "elderly gentleman" with beautiful, liquid gray eyes and a wisp of silver beard, the Met's steely, bespectacled cardinal, with his roughly brushed red vestments, and Boston's glorious *Fray Hortensio Félix Paravicino* (c. 1609), with his sidelong glance, enormous book, and rigid pose. Fray Hortensio's handsome head, poised above the folds of an enveloping white cowl, is trapped between the skewed dark rectangle of the chair back and his dark cape; the tension implicit in this wonderful picture, emphasized by the insecurely balanced books and sharply bent wrists, is almost worthy of Cézanne. I kept thinking about that early full length portrait of Cézanne's friend, the painter Achille Emperaire, with his oversized, rather beautiful, bearded head, seated uncomfortably in an enormous, stiff armchair. Confronted by pictures like that of Fray Hortensio, we can easily understand why Manet, who, despite his enormous appetite for Spanish painting, had trouble with El Greco's religious images, was a fan of the portraits.

It is impossible to fault an exhibition that brings together the Met's *Opening of the Fifth Seal* and the National Gallery's *Laocoön*, allowing us to eavesdrop on the dialogue between these two marvelous late pictures, one an exalted religious vision, the other a febrile reimagining of the antique—with Toledo standing in for Troy. (The inclusion of the Met's iconic *View of Toledo* [*c.* 1597–1599], with its inky sky and haunted masonry, enriches the mix and allows for further comparisons.) The agitated nudes in both *Laocoön* and *The Opening of the Fifth Seal*, with their nervy, undulating contours and expressively angled limbs, are deeply dependent on the exaggerated anatomy of

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Michelangelo's most ferocious figures, and, at the same time, completely original; they are rather like dancers whose gestures and postures communicate emotion abstractly. Seeing these canonical masterworks together, however, underlines the inadequacies of the exhibition's other immensely ambitious late works, such as the huge *Adoration of the Shepherds* intended by the artist to hang above his tomb and the equally large, swirling *Virgin of the Immaculate Conception* (between 1608 and 1613, Museo de Santa Cruz, Toledo). In both of these late extravaganzas, Mannerist attenuations of form, *contraposto* poses, drapery so brittle that it seems to have a life of its own, and "jewel-tone" hues, all seen under theatrical spot-lighting, produce images that seem to be less driven by religious fervor than by a desire for consistent style; the attenuated proportions of the figures in these pictures invoke the fashion sketch more than they do aesthetic eloquence.

The show is so full of wonderful pictures and so intelligently installed that it is ill-mannered to complain about any of it. My only regret—apart from the absence of *The Burial of Count Orgaz*—is that the great El Greco altarpiece at the Art Institute of Chicago was unable to make the trip to New York. (Ardently requested but too big to travel, I was told.) But the rest of the exhibition more than makes up for any omissions. Add an excellent catalogue, for once of manageable size, with essays by a roster of international El Greco scholars, good plates, and enlightening entries that include useful directions to "essential bibliography," and we have yet another reason to be grateful to the Metropolitan.

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Music

New York chronicle

by Jay Nordlinger

The big news out of the beginning of the season was the opening of a new hall "at Carnegie." I speak of the Judy and Arthur Zankel Hall, which is the much-praised "performance space" down in the basement—the basement of the Carnegie complex. What you and I think of as Carnegie Hall is technically the Isaac Stern Auditorium. The lovely little annex upstairs is the Joan and Sanford I. Weill Recital Hall. And we now have, down below, Zankel—which is also a recital hall, but a mid-sized one, seating about six hundred people. As the Carnegie brass say, the advent of Zankel "restores Andrew Carnegie's original vision of three great stages under one roof."

Zankel kicked itself off with what was described as a "press preview"—a concert over the noon hour for critics, music administrators, and various others. The program was an eclectic one, reflecting Carnegie's desire to present Zankel as a place where "anything can happen." The concert began with a blackened hall and a single spotlight onstage. Into that spotlight walked the soprano Renée Fleming, arguably the biggest star in classical music today. She sang "Shatter Me, Music," a short, unaccompanied song composed for the occasion by John Corigliano (using a poem by Rilke). The song is angular, a little jazzy, and very American—and Fleming sang it spiffily.

Then came the pianist Emanuel Ax, for a piece by Debussy: his "Pagodes." Ax played it decently, but the hero of this performance was Zankel Hall, as it captured what colors the pianist had to offer superbly. Then Fleming returned for a couple of songs of Strauss: one rapturous—"Cäcilie"—and the other quiet and sublime—"Morgen." After the second song, Fleming remarked, "Real intimacy in New York City. I love it!" The audience applauded warmly, but what about the Weill hall, Renée, or, for that matter, Alice Tully (at Lincoln Center)?

At this point, a screen came down for a brief film on Carnegie and Zankel, narrated by the legendary mezzo Marilyn Horne—a woman who can speak about as well as she can sing (and she would tell you they are related, I believe). Then Fleming came back to sing the famous aria from Villa-Lobos's *Bachiana brasileira* No. 5, with eight young cellos (players of the cello, that is).

From here, the program got a little funky, which, again, is a point that Carnegie's leaders wanted to make. John Adams—Carnegie's in-house composer—led a group of young musicians and the violinist Jennifer Koh in a piece by the late Lou Harrison: "Concerto in slendro," which carries Indonesian influences. Then the Kenny Barron Jazz Quintet appeared for a short set, and they were followed by the Fula Flute Ensemble, a West African group.

That was the press preview. The first official concert—the start of a September-long opening festival in Zankel—was an all-Adams affair, although Adams selected none of his own music for the program. What I

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mean is, Adams served as conductor again, leading graduates of Carnegie's Professional Training Workshops, gathered under the name of The Zankel Band. Carnegie is big on youth, for Zankel. The composers Adams selected were Ives, Harrison (the "Concerto in slendro," once more), Thomas Adès, and Esa-Pekka Salonen. Adès is a still-young composer—born 1971—who has been famous since he was about twenty. Adams and his charges performed *Living Toys*, which is described in Adès's own biography as his "most-performed work." It is a descendant, I suppose, of Gounod's "Funeral March of a Marionette"—and of Herbert's March from *Babes in Toyland*! But it is not exactly a little charmer. *Living Toys* has a playful element, to be sure, but it is almost relentlessly cacophonous. It also suffers from some monotony. Still, the Zankel Band played enthusiastically, and the audience showered them with approval.

Esa-Pekka Salonen is best known as the music director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, but he is a determined composer, and this concert offered his *Mania*, a kind of cello concerto. The piece is not so much maniacal as nervous (in the manner so favored by today's composers). The soloist was Salonen's fellow Finn Anssi Karttunen, for whom the piece was written. He produced a warm sound, maintained a musical poise, and met all technical challenges, which are numerous—Salonen desired to provide a channel for virtuosity.

The Emerson String Quartet dropped by—dropped by Zankel Hall, that is, on a subsequent evening—bringing with them that same Emanuel Ax. The pianist joined the quartet for the great Dvořák Piano Quintet in A major. This is one of the most delightsome pieces in the entire chamber repertory, and the Emerson plus Ax did creditably by it. The Finale, however, was a bit heavy, a bit sluggish, and a bit thick-fingered. This movement ought to take flight; these players rather kept it on the ground.

The four "Emersons" had opened the concert with Haydn's String Quartet in D major, Op. 76, No. 5, one of that composer's greatest quartets (which is saying something). The four played with sensitivity and wisdom, and I should single out the second movement, marked Largo: Cantabile e mesto. This last word means "sad," not a mood commonly associated with "Papa" Haydn. But this composer—like all people—felt and expressed a great many moods, not just joviality (consider the awesome depths of *The Creation*, for example). The Largo features striking, ghostly modulations; Haydn, as is his wont, finds magic within orderliness.

The other work on the program—the middle work (for the concert ended with the Dvořák)—was Ned Rorem's String Quartet No. 4. As you may recall from the second half of last season, this is a Rorem year, as the composer turns eighty during it. (It is also, more prominently, a Berlioz year—the bicentennial of that composer's birth.) In the String Quartet No. 4, Rorem offers pictures at an exhibition: and it is a one-man show. The composer names ten movements after paintings by Picasso. The first is "Minotaur," anxious, restless. Then comes "Child Holding a Dove," tender (and "French," as Rorem likes to describe his writing). "Acrobat on a Ball" is wonderfully goofy and sly. And "Still Life," gently rocking, manages to bring a painting to "life" while keeping it "still." Amazing. The high point of this quartet, or suite, is the eighth section, "Self Portrait," which is utterly engrossing—close to devastating. Rorem's opus, on the whole, feels a little long to me, and slightly unvaried toward the end. But it is a noteworthy achievement.

The last Zankel event that I will address is a concert by James Levine and his Met Chamber Ensemble. These musicales have traditionally been held in the Weill Recital Hall, and they will be again—as also, alternatively, in Zankel. On this particular occasion, Levine surrounded himself with some of his favorite musicians and composers. The program began with Mozart's Trio for Clarinet, Viola, and Piano, K. 498. This gave Levine a chance to show off his great

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clarinetist Ricardo Morales, who played with his usual marvelous sound and silky-smooth, ever-flexible technique. Next came a song-cycle by Elliott Carter called *In Sleep, in Thunder*, which sets six poems of Robert Lowell. The composer, rather touchingly—and encouragingly—was present. He composed this cycle in 1981, when he was a mere pup of seventy-three. Carter looks as though he has barely lost a step.

In Sleep, in Thunder calls for a tenor and fourteen instruments, and the singing was done by Matthew Polenzani, who is a real up-and-comer—at least as far as Levine is concerned. Actually, he has already up and come. Polenzani is everywhere this season, including on "all three stages at Carnegie," as his bio notes. Some weeks after this Met Chamber Ensemble event, he gave a solo recital in the big hall—Isaac Stern Auditorium—with Levine at the piano. In the Carter, Polenzani displayed his light, pleasant voice and his reliable vocal control. If I may borrow from sports talk, this is a man who "sings within himself."

Next appeared another Levine-favored singer, Jennifer Welch-Babidge, who in this period happened to be starring in *Lucia di Lammermoor* at the New York City Opera. Welch-Babidge, a soprano from North Carolina, performed brief vocal works of Anton Weber: his "Five Canons," Op. 16, "Three Traditional Rhymes," Op. 17, and "Three Songs," Op. 18. She sang these in exemplary fashion, applying bel canto technique as much to Webern as to Donizetti. She was, as we have come to expect, both agile and strong. She was also accurate and fearless. Webern's music involves enormous leaps, and notes far, far above the staff. Welch-Babidge handled it all with aplomb.

Then James Levine concluded the evening—or late afternoon—with an account of Brahms's Serenade No. 2 in A major. It was warm, settling, nourishing—Brahmsian.

Over at the New York Philharmonic, Maestro Lorin Maazel is back for his second season. As regular readers may recall, I was deeply skeptical when this orchestra booted Kurt Masur—its music director of eleven years—and replaced him with Maazel, a brilliant but often mystifying and frustrating musician. But Maazel's first season was almost invariably interesting and often compelling, heightening anticipation for the second season.

That season opened with a gala concert purveying Verdi and Tchaikovsky. The guest soloist was Samuel Ramey, the bass from Colby, Kansas, who sang arias from *Simon Boccanegra*, *Ernani*, and *Don Carlo*. Ramey is no spring chicken, and for several seasons he has suffered from some wobbles. But his solid training and consistent professionalism have kept him in good stead. He displayed secure intonation and a wide vocal range (just a half step shy of two octaves). Musically and dramatically, he retains all his authority—more, perhaps. King Philip's lament from *Don Carlo* was heartrending, leaving a lump in the throat (ours, that is).

Maazel had his orchestra firing on all cylinders: in two overtures of Verdi—those to *La Forza del Destino* and *I Vespri Siciliani*—and in Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 5. I know, I know: That old warhorse again, the Tchaikovsky? The ultimate "gala piece"? Yet if a conductor and an orchestra accord it its due, it has all the thrill it ever had. And that is what Maazel and the New York Philharmonic did: accord it its due. This was a stirring, dynamic Fifth, superbly shaped and executed. Oh, sure, the conductor indulged in some of his usual idiosyncrasies, including the smothering of phrases with micromanagement. But one gets used to that in Lorin Maazel, even as one gets used to—say—the breathy mannerisms of Renée Fleming, a great singer.

In the following concert, Maazel led off with a new symphony by Stephen Hartke (a California composer of about fifty). This was his Symphony No. 3, which employs a vocal quartet and a poem from an unknown eighth- or ninth-century Anglo-Saxon poet: "The Ruin." The Philharmonic commissioned Hartke to write the piece for the second anniversary of September 11. The composer is deeply interested, and steeped,

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in the medieval, and this symphony has obvious medieval influences and echoings. It is skillfully conceived, blending harmonies and dissonances, and leaving an overall effect of elegy.

In the second half of the program, Maazel delivered a Mahler Fifth—tight, bracing, unsentimental, unneurotic. Un-Bernsteinian, in a word. Some may complain, and have complained, that Maazel can be a little cold, and this is true. But his straightforwardness can act as a tonic, and he is willing—most of the time—to let Mahler (for example) speak for himself.

The Philharmonic was not through with its excellent playing, in these initial weeks of the season. One of the orchestra's subscription series boasted *The Rite of Spring*, Stravinsky's kaleidoscopic shocker from 1913. This is the sort of piece that Maazel should eat up, and eat it up he did. The dense score's challenges were hardly challenges at all to him—and the orchestra responded faultlessly. Before the intermission, Maazel had led an equally masterly performance of Strauss's *Don Quixote*, in which first cellist Carter Brey was the main soloist. Prior to entering orchestral life, Brey had a prominent solo career, and his turn in the Strauss reminded us why. He sent a gorgeous tone through the hall, and his technique is so assured, one can simply sit back and enjoy his musical approach. He was every inch his "character," Don Quixote, comporting himself like a singer.

Before we get to the Metropolitan Opera, shall we have a word about the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center? The big news here is that the Society's longtime artistic director, David Shifrin, will step down at the end of this season. (On the side, Shifrin is one of the best clarinetists—and best instrumentalists—in the world.) It is my hope that he will, at some point, take up the baton, as he is a lavishly talented and brainy musician, and the world is not overrun with good, or even competent, conductors. But what Shifrin has planned for himself in the years to come, I have no idea.

The Society's opening, gala concert offered two famous and beloved serenades for strings: the one by Dvořák and the one by Tchaikovsky. Like the Tchaikovsky Fifth, these works are subject to hackneying, and they need to be treated with care—with sincerity, wisdom, and heart. The twenty-one who came together to form the Chamber Society's little orchestra were largely successful in this, even if their ensembleship was faulty and their execution somewhat ragged. It was a pleasure to see, in the lead violin's chair, Joseph Silverstein, the violinist-turned-conductor who has been a fixture on the musical scene for as long as most people can remember. He began his career about 1950.

The Met's season opened with something important: Renée Fleming's first Violetta in that house. Fleming is one of the most important sopranos of our time, and she is an important soprano historically; Violetta—from Verdi's *Traviata*, as you know—is a crucial soprano role. The American diva scored an undisputed success, although she did not have as fine a first act as she might have: She was not completely secure in her voice or in her technique. But she got better and better, delivering vocal thrills and a dramatic portrayal that touched the heart of this singular character.

Fleming's Alfredo was Ramón Vargas, a Mexican who is one of the Great Tenorial Hopes, in (sad) anticipation of the retirements of Luciano Pavarotti and Plácido Domingo. Vargas made an impressive Alfredo, dispatching his aria—"De' miei bollenti spiriti"—with style and confidence. Practically stealing the show, however, was Dmitri Hvorostovsky, the "Siberian tiger." This great baritone was a first-class Germont, proving, once more, that he is among the most accomplished Verdians we have. The Act II exchanges between him and Fleming were memorably poignant.

In the pit was Valery Gergiev, the Metropolitan Opera's principal guest conductor. (Levine, having sat out Opening Night, would appear the next night, for a

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sublime and mesmerizing *Tristan und Isolde*.) Gergiev was not at his best for *Traviata*, allowing rhythmic tentativeness and imprecision, for example. Less than a week later, he was back for the revival of the company's triple bill called *Stravinsky*. This is an evening—or afternoon—consisting of *The Rite of Spring*, *Le Rossignol* (the composer's "lyric tale in three acts"), and *Oedipus Rex*, that peculiar "opera-oratorio," as Stravinsky labeled it. Two seasons before, the Met had revived its French triple bill, *Parade*, which brings you Satie, Poulenc, and Ravel. Both productions are satisfying on many levels, not least the visual.

The *Rite* was danced by the Metropolitan Opera Ballet, with choreography by Doug Vallone. That choreography was full of primitive writhings, fightings, and gropings —I thought of the California recall election, which was going on at the same time. The orchestra's traversal of the score did not have the polish, virtuosity, and élan of the New York Philharmonic's. But, as an acquaintance of mine pointed out, Maestro Gergiev's role was slightly different from that of Maestro Maazel: The former was leading the *Rite* in ballet performance, while the latter had the luxury of a purely orchestral performance—no dancers in mind. By this argument, Gergiev was required to be more measured and less dazzling.

Le Rossignol—based on a fairy tale by Hans Christian Andersen—is, quite simply, one of the most exquisite things you will ever witness in an opera house. The Met's sets and costumes are by David Hockney, and the choreography is by Sir Frederick Ashton. The leading roles of the Fisherman and the Nightingale are both danced and sung. In this revival, they were danced by two of the most worshiped ballet stars in the city: Damian Woetzel and Julie Kent. Thus did the New York City Ballet (Woetzel) lie down with the American Ballet Theatre (Kent). Both dancers were their almost eerily composed selves.

Singing those roles at the back of the orchestra pit were an English tenor, Barry Banks, and a Russian soprano, Olga Trifonova. Each was elegant and radiant—exactly right—with Trifonova exhibiting more strength than you might expect in a nightingale. This was not Jenny Lind; or, rather, it was Jenny Lind with some muscle tone. Gergiev conveyed this gentle, lulling score marvelously, and the entire performance had the quality of a star-lit dream.

As for *Oedipus Rex*, it had its primal pulse and drama, with outstanding singing by Stephanie Blythe, the Jocasta. This American mezzo not infrequently sounds like Marilyn Horne, and, in my experience, she had never sounded more Horne-like—not a bad way to go, as Horne was a Jocasta par excellence.

Carnegie Hall—Carnegie Hall proper, which is to say, Isaac Stern Auditorium—opened its season with three concerts by the Kirov Orchestra, conducted by . . . Valery Gergiev, who else? This man fairly owned New York: opening night at the Met, opening night at Carnegie Hall. Lorin Maazel is lucky he got to preside over opening night at the New York Philharmonic. The Kirov's first concert featured Maxim Vengerov as soloist, in Lalo's *Symphonie espagnole*, what I would call a "serious showpiece" for violin. Vengerov is as talented and natural as anyone in music, and he managed to milk the Lalo for all it was worth, without descending into vulgarity. A truly musical person cannot be vulgar, no matter what the score or occasion. After intermission, Gergiev served up Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade*, which was not supertransporting, but adequate. The society crowd that populated the hall adored it.

So, Carnegie Hall was off—but overshadowed, curiously enough, by the hoopla over Zankel, a splendid addition, to be sure. And one more thing: We are to pronounce the name of this hall "Zan-KELL." The tendency, however, is to pronounce it "ZAN-kil." Will the public cooperate? The original pronunciation is "Car-NAY-gie," but we long ago fell into "CARN-ih-gie." Which is fine with me. With you too, I expect.

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The media

The culture of mistrust

by James Bowman

It was a fantastic laboratory test, done as if to order. On Monday, Howard Kurtz wrote in *The Washington Post*, in an article headed "For 'Gotcha' Reporting the Getting's Not So Good," that scandal-mania in the media was not being successfully transmitted to media consumers and especially to voters, who are told with some regularity that candidates for public office are concealing discreditable information about themselves. "What if bad press no longer matters?" he wondered. His examples included General Wesley Clark, who made what some in the press saw as a disastrous first step in his campaign for the Democratic Presidential nomination when he said, first, that he would have voted for the war in Iraq and then, less than twenty-four hours later, that he "never" would have done so. Likewise, Governor Howard Dean, another candidate for the Democratic nomination, was slammed by a third candidate, Dick Gephardt, for having criticized one of the Democratic party's sacred cows, Medicare, back in 1995—charges to which the press gave considerable attention, though no one else seemed to do so. Finally, Arnold Schwarzenegger looked like winning the recall election to replace Governor Gray Davis of California, Kurtz said, "despite an avalanche of negative headlines about his inaccessibility, his lack of specifics and his wild-and-crazy bodybuilding days."

That was on Monday. On Thursday we found out what a real avalanche looked like. Or, perhaps, as the conservative Media Research Center called it, changing the metaphor, "a perfect storm of anti-conservative news items." Not only did the *Los Angeles Times* publish a report that day quoting six women (four of them anonymous) who were accusing Schwarzenegger of inappropriate touching that amounted, in the view of some, to sexual assault, but also Rush Limbaugh had had to resign from a television sports show for what was taken to be a racial remark at the same time as it was revealed (in *The National Enquirer*) that he was under investigation for illegally buying prescription pain-killers. Also in the news was the fact that David Kay's official investigation had been unable to find Weapons of Mass Destruction in Iraq, while speculative stories continued about the leak to the press of a CIA agent's identity by members of the Bush administration. About Schwarzenegger and Limbaugh, Kurtz wrote: "You have to wonder whether their enemies are out to get them," and he called the Schwarzenegger story "the *L.A. Times*'s October surprise." Howard will have his little joke, but, really, why would you even wonder? Of *course* their enemies are out to get them. That's why they're enemies. The question is, or ought to be, what is and is not legitimate in the attempt to get them?

Just a little sidebar appealing to my sense of *Schadenfreude* about *The New York Times* was the fact that the latter paper published, on

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the same day as the story about Arnold as serial groper appeared in the *Los Angeles Times*, a piece by Jim Rutenberg noting that

> Close observers say they have been surprised by how relatively tame the advertisements have been for such a heated campaign.
>
> "This is not exactly the politics of personal destruction," Marty Kaplan, associate dean of the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Southern California, said. "The stuff that we're seeing is factually based as opposed to, 'The other guy's scum.'"

A good thing he added that "with plenty of time left, the climate can change quickly"! Or maybe he thought that rushing largely unsupported allegations by anonymous sources purporting to prove that "the other guy's scum" five days before the election was OK because it was "factually based"? Naturally, all hints that the Democrats, or perhaps Governor Gray Davis's campaign itself, had put the paper up to it were strenuously denied. "*The Times*," wrote the *Times*, "did not learn of any of the six women from Schwarzenegger's rivals in the recall race. And none of the women approached the newspaper on her own. Reporters contacted them in the course of a seven-week examination of Schwarzenegger's behavior toward women on and off the movie set." Sure. And I'll bet all those reporters were Schwarzenegger backers too, before they learned to their considerable shock and amazement what their man had done.

But even if they were, how could the *Times* not have been seen as politically motivated in seeking out such a story at such a time? The high-minded editorial in *The Wall Street Journal* claimed that "If the women's allegations are true, it doesn't matter if the timing of the revelations are [*sic*] politically motivated." Yes it does! That's precisely what does matter, at least from the point of view of the political culture. Devastating and humiliating as the experience doubtless was for the women who were touched "inappropriately" by the Austrian lunkhead, their bringing it to the public attention five days before an election amounted to political blackmail which, if it had succeeded, would have opened the way to ever more outrageous and untested allegations in advance of every election.

But the pretense of shock and horror at Mr. Schwarzenegger's "insensitive" behavior was nowhere to be penetrated, apparently, at least not by anyone with the temerity to ask *cui bono*? There were few indeed even with the hardihood to snicker behind their hands at the *Times*'s reporting that one of its sources claimed Schwarzenegger "often used vulgar words for vagina and clitoris during her contact with him" on a film-set. "He was crude, boisterous, and disparaging around women," this woman said. "In the makeup room, his language was so bad I turned around and walked out." Under other circumstances it might have been heartening news that the *Los Angeles Times* was announcing a return of Victorian standards. How dare you use such language, sir? There are ladies present. But those of us who might otherwise have been encouraged by such a development could not but reflect that there might have been another and less creditable reason why the paper purported suddenly to have found that foul language in Hollywood was front page news.

Interestingly, Schwarzenegger showed himself to be enough of a politician to understand that Clintonian denial would, under the circumstances, be less politically effective than an apology. The apology itself naturally became a part of the sordid political game, "a calculated move," as *The New York Times* disingenuously put it, "by Mr. Schwarzenegger's campaign to prevent the latest accusations from derailing the campaign on the last weekend of the recall race." Not, I guess, that the accusations themselves could have been a calculated move to bring about just such a derailing in the first place!

> "Let me tell you something," the actor said. "A lot of [what] you see in the stories is not true, but at the same time, I have to tell you that I

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always say, that wherever there is smoke, there is fire. That is true.

"So I want to say to you, yes, that I have behaved badly sometimes. Yes, it is true that I was on rowdy movie sets and I have done things that were not right which I thought then was playful, but now I recognize that I have offended people.

"And to those people that I have offended, I want to say to them I am deeply sorry about that and I apologize because this is not what I'm trying to do."

I myself would have thought a lot better of Arnold if he had stuck with his first comment, which was to call the allegations a desperation tactic on the part of Gray Davis and "trash politics" or "puke politics"—which they were.

There were plenty of other things I didn't like about the muscleman, and I hated the whole idea of the recall. It was itself a manifestation of the same breakdown of trust in public life as the trash politics that so prominently came into it. After the vote, Schwarzenegger said that he saw his election as a conferring of a public trust and that "We need to bring back the trust in the government itself." But how could he do that when he came to office as a result of the public's saying to his predecessor, in effect, that the trust reposed in *him* wasn't really trust at all but only a willingness to let him serve at the public's pleasure? Moreover, I think Schwarzenegger is, as his mother might have put it, a dunderhead. *Arnold, du bist ein dummkopf!* I think so not just because of his failure to grasp the shame and humiliation he was inflicting on those poor women, terrible though that no doubt was, but for making as his signature issue the need to raise education spending, which is the most foolish of political crowd-pleasers. Any hope of improving schools, in California or the nation, must depend on *cutting* education spending. For years we have been increasing it in response to every new report of declining standards in schools, mindlessly continuing to reward failure and expecting that the system will therefore turn off its own money-valve by producing success.

But in spite of all these negatives, I would have risen, had I been living in California, from a bed of pain, or struggled through swamps and over mountains, in order to vote for the big dummy, just on the off-chance that it might contribute to some small discouragement of the media's insatiable appetite for scandal and their willingness to found our public life on ever more extravagant charges of personal and political corruption lodged by each side against the other—as if the only thing that could interest us about our public figures is what they might be hiding. What does this say not about them but about us?

Not that this was at all likely to occur to the media. Scandal is too profitable for them. But just as the Republicans' impeaching Bill Clinton, even if he had deserved it, was spectacularly misjudged, since they were politically interested parties, so the media's natural propensity for scandal-hunting should be put on hold in advance of an election lest they reveal themselves as politically *engagé*. As a long-time advocate of open biases openly proclaimed, I would welcome such a development myself, but for the fact that I find it utterly unimaginable apart from the disgustingly sanctimonious pretense that all is done in the public interest. If pressed—as of course it never is—the newspaper would have denied that it had tossed away any remaining claim to be politically unengaged on the grounds of public duty, perhaps, because . . . because Schwarzenegger might inappropriately touch the employees in the governor's office? Yeah, that must be what was uppermost in the editorial minds of the *Los Angeles Times*, the well-being of the secretaries of Sacramento.

Not that women can only be secretaries. Oh, dear God! You don't think I believe that do you? For "Gotcha" journalism is not limited to attempts at electoral manipulation, as poor Mr. Limbaugh found out when he said that the race-consciousness of

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the media might, just occasionally, affect the way things are reported. The media's taking this as a "racist" remark suggests that we are conducting our public discourse in keeping with the principles of the Inquisition or the show-trials in Stalinist Russia where the lightest word can suddenly turn a suspect person into an Enemy of the People. Any of us may make a mistake or a misstatement, or attempt to make a joke or a complex argument in over-simple terms and suddenly find ourselves publicly identified with discredited and discreditable confederates up to and including Hitler. This also happened to Schwarzenegger, coincidentally. Perhaps feeling outdone in sanctimoniousness by its west-coast counterpart, the sanctimony-champion *New York Times* made a bid to recover its crown by digging up—out of a book proposal, forsooth—the most hilarious of the allegations against the California muscle-man: that he had allegedly expressed an admiration for the late German dictator who, like Schwarzenegger himself, was born in Austria and went on to achieve political success in a foreign country.

Here is how the paper's reporters, Adam Nagourney and David D. Kirkpatrick, put it the day after the story of the six women broke in California:

> The book proposal by the producer, George Butler, included what were presented as verbatim excerpts from interviews with Mr. Schwarzenegger in the filming of the documentary *Pumping Iron*. In a part of the interview not used in the film, Mr. Schwarzenegger was asked to name his heroes—"who do you admire most."
>
> "It depends for what," Mr. Schwarzenegger said, according to the transcript in the book proposal. "I admired Hitler, for instance, because he came from being a little man with almost no formal education up to power. And I admire him for being such a good public speaker."
>
> In addition to the transcript, Mr. Butler wrote in his book proposal that in the 1970's, he considered Mr. Schwarzenegger a "flagrant, outspoken admirer of Hitler." In the proposal, Mr. Butler also said he had seen Mr. Schwarzenegger playing "Nazi marching songs from long-playing records in his collection at home" and said that the actor "frequently clicked his heels and pretended to be an S.S. officer."
>
> . . . In his book proposal, Mr. Butler [quoted] Mr. Schwarzenegger saying, "I admire him for being such a good public speaker and for what he did with it."
>
> But early this morning, Mr. Butler called back, saying he had driven back to his New Hampshire home and found another transcript of the interview, with different wording: "I admire him for being such a good public speaker and for his way of getting to the people and so on. But I didn't admire him for what he did with it. It's very hard to say who I admire, who are my heroes."

I love that formulation: "with different wording."

But what I like best about the passage is that, apparently, it occurred to no one at the *Times* to say, after Butler's callback, "Rats! There goes our story." Not at all! Even Schwarzenegger's admiring Hitler's powers of oratory was big news to *The New York Times*. It was almost like something out of Mel Brooks, who has his comic Nazi and the author of the musical *Springtime for Hitler*, Franz Liebkind (played by Kenneth Mars in the film version of *The Producers*), say: "Hitler was a better dancer than Churchill; Hitler was a better dresser than Churchill; Hitler was a better *painter* than Churchill: he could paint a house in one day, two coats." It seems obvious to me that in clicking his heels or playing a Nazi marching song, Schwarzenegger was putting on his Franz Liebkind act for a gullible producer who he knew would feel a delicious sense of shock at it.

The *Times* article also helped ensure that the garbled quotation, expressing a more general admiration for Hitler, went on being quoted for days by the likes of Al Franken, self-appointed hammer of the right in such books as *Rush Limbaugh is a Big Fat Idiot* and *Lies and the Lying Liars*

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Who Tell Them: A Fair and Balanced Look at the Right. It didn't seem to bother him that, in his eagerness to find any stick with which to beat Schwarzenegger, he himself was telling lies. Such people were prepared to abandon not only a sense of humor, or of proportion, but also their very judgment about what a man might or might not really have said—never mind what he might or might not really have believed. In doing so, they showed themselves to be either absurdly gullible, or else utterly cynical: the former if they really believed Schwarzenegger said what they said he said and the latter if they didn't but were willing to attribute it to him anyway.

But that is the way the media game is played in a world where outrage is a commodity and is traded on the media markets of left and right for potential gain. And not just political gain either. In the popular culture, "outrageous" is a term of high approval, and those who seek to serve the market for outrageousness package the factitious outrage of rap musicians or performance artists or film or sports stars for the appropriate audiences. Schwarzenegger himself acknowledged that he had taken advantage of the market for outrage to promote himself and body-building in the now-famous interview with *Oui* magazine in 1977 in which he suggested that he had taken part in orgies. When asked about this during the campaign he at first said "Obviously, I've made statements that were ludicrous and crazy and outrageous and all those things, because that's the way I always was," which wasn't quite an admission of the behavior, and later (on "Hardball with Chris Matthews") suggested that he had made it up. "There were only a few hundred gymnasiums in America at the time when I came over here," he said. "Now there are hundreds of thousands. So we were very successful with our campaign to promote bodybuilding, to promote fitness, the health industry and all of that."

After all, even a dummkopf can figure out that readers of *Oui* magazine are more likely to want to hear about orgies than no-orgies—just as readers of the *Los Angeles Times* are more likely to want to hear about sex-scandals than no-sex scandals—or no scandals at all. But no one in the media ever acknowledges that the amount of scandal in the world bears any relation to the media's own financial interest in producing enough of it to meet the public demand. And that may be why those who report on the outrage of others—whether the six gropees in Hollywood or "women's groups" or Arianna Huffington—always do so with a straight face. "I believe what this story is going to do is really bring to question this big issue of trust and credibility. If his word and image are consistently proven to be false, he doesn't have a leg to stand on," said Mrs. Huffington, whose own legs had so lately been cut from under her in the race against him. Imagine how newsworthy it is that *she* is shocked! Likewise, the chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus, Rep. Elijah E. Cummings (D-Md.), said that Rush Limbaugh's remarks were "outrageous and offensive." Really? Offensive? Does the very idea of racial hypocrisy in the white-dominated media give him, perhaps, the vapors? I would say that I suspect nobody is *really* offended by *anything* anymore—not unless he stands to gain from publicizing the offense—but for the fact that it would be another surrender to the culture of mistrust.

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Tickling your catastrophe

by Max Watman

I'd like to dispense straightaway with what I like about Martin Amis and move on to the meatier stuff. His secondary life's project—his primary one being himself—can be seen as an attempt to write out how harassing the daily details of life can be. I like his characters' endless confrontation with the banal gone crazy. That's why, in *The Information* (1995), Richard-the-not-well-known-novelist's paisley pajamas are soaked in sweat, that's why he fears his mail, that's the whole thing about lugging the Hoover. His wife says: "Could you nip round to the electrician and pop the Hoover in?" And it is torture, not only because "Richard's nipping and popping days were definitely over" but also because the Hoover becomes the luggable metaphor for all that he has failed to achieve. He is convinced that Beckett never had to nip around the corner and get his vacuum cleaner fixed. (Which I've always thought of as a lost opportunity, for Amis, considering that it's a modern-world problem, and Beckett probably never did have to do that, because he would have had a maid, not a vacuum.)

This is the same thing Amis was trying in *Time's Arrow*. The world moves backwards, so there's lots of hassle at the market, where you put things back on the shelves, and in the toilet.

The little things add up to the big thing. In *The Information*, Richard is having a crisis, a midlife crisis: But "it wasn't his fault—it was death's fault."

In *Yellow Dog*, Xan Meo gets his head bashed in at a pub.[1] Early in his convalescence, "The dullest chores of body-maintenance, those that normally made you numb with inanition, were hereabouts hailed as *skills*. . . . Aslant in the next bed but one there lay a seventy-year-old who was being taught how to swallow."

His recovery is physical, moral, psychological, etc. He's forgotten how to behave towards his wife, his children, the world. He is harassed by the banal.

The King, another character in the book, would naturally have a difficult time with the simple stuff.

His daughter gets into trouble in the bath when someone films her in there.

Clint Smoker, a very lowbrow tabloid journalist, has sexual issues.

It's always the first things in Amis. It's the ordinary gone extraordinary.

But that's all Amis has left, I'm afraid.

The Information has more to show us than a good example with a vacuum: it was his last big novel. Difficult to believe, really. It seems like a long time ago. *Night Train* was one of the worst books I've ever read. Let's pretend it never happened and concentrate on the striking, newly toothy young man on the back cover of *The Information*. Martin was hip. He was young. He'd caused a huge scene with all that

1 *Yellow Dog*, by Martin Amis; Mirimax Books, 288 pages, $24.95.

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chucking of one agent and friend for a new, more mercenary, one. And didn't the Jackal do him right; he got, what, a million bucks for that book?

He was the Brit with his finger on the pulse. He was the novelist who knew the world. Now?

Wow, is that ever gone.

Amis is scrambling. He's clearly removed himself from the world, and his cartoons of it no longer feel engaged. "When Xan went out . . . he was very regularly unnerved by mobile phones." He's trying to get in touch with his sons, musing on the connectivity and how everyone on the street is talking to himself. "As for the people who talked to themselves and really were crazy, you should issue them with mobile phones; and then they could go around talking to themselves and no one would think they were crazy."

Amis might as well be telling jokes about men never putting the toilet seat down, he might as well have followed that up with: "Take my wife, please."

Clint Smoker has piercings. He has a handcuff that hangs down out of his nose, and he's always nudging it around with his tongue. It feels, when Amis writes it, like an old codger pointing out some fab-four haircut.

And porn. Amis wrote about pornography in *Talk* magazine. (There's a great sentence, so predictable, and yet so funny.) He flew out to California, and he hung out with people in the business of pornography, and he learned some stuff. He put it all in the book. But it feels, once again, like a desperate move to stay with it.

Where once was a hip mix of sharply observed characters, there is now only semblance.

The central story, that of Xan Meo, regards his being a bad husband. Someone could use the actual examples of his being bad to refute this, but I'm never convinced that is all as rotten as the book wants us to believe. In his letter of apology, he sets up this crazy system by which men were "in power for five million years. Now (where we live) they share it with women. . . . I went back. As if through a trapdoor I dropped into the past, and we shared that disaster." Later in the letter: "Naturally I wish I could forget the creature I became, but I can't and won't."

He spends most of the book feeling contrite for getting drunk and molesting his wife. He is accused of having a sexual attraction to his daughter, but we only see him thinking about the accusation. We see him ensnared, undressing her in the bathroom, but we were there, we know it was innocent, so when his wife walks in and is aghast, we think only that it's unfair.

His transgressions are unearned, textually; his exile from the family and subsequent return to the fold is hollow and maudlin.

There's another story about a dead husband willfully bringing down the plane on which his wife is a passenger. I never could figure it out.

And another about Clint Smoker pursuing an Internet romance and attending sexual enhancement programs.

And another about Joseph Andrews (yes, much is made of the name), a tough who wants to return to England.

And another about Henry England, the king.

And so on. The spark of cross-class interference is gone. The slangy, hip banter is the same as it always has been. I felt, throughout, that maybe Martin Amis has just had his day, and his time is past. When I want up-to-the-minute fast-talking Englishmen running amok across their own class barriers I think I'll go see a Guy Ritchie movie. *Snatch* and *Lock Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* could probably never have been made were it not for Martin Amis. But the student, I think, has surpassed his doddery master.

Another book that unfolds from cataclysm—a popular theme two years after 9/11—is Vendela Vida's *And Now You Can Go*.[2]

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2 *And Now You Can Go*, by Vendela Vida; Knopf, 208 pages, $19.95.

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"It was 2:15 in the afternoon of December 2 when a man holding a gun approached me in Riverside Park. . . . I was twenty-one and had moved to New York that September, knowing no one." So begins the book, and our acquaintance with Ellis.

This is the kind of book that people think is "sharply observed." Vida is supposed to have a "keen eye." These are book-reviewing clichés I am guilty of using, too. You will not find me using them in reference to this book, however.

Vida has attempted a kind of fable. She didn't use anthropomorphic animals, true, but she did use very simple characters. She has taken to the extreme the trick of giving your characters a prominent feature by which they can be recognized. These characters become their features. They aren't humans anymore than the crow and the fox were: they just act like them, barely.

In pursuit of her fable she has chosen to write from a kind of idiotic dreamstate. This is where all those keen-eyed closely-observed details are supposed to come in, but they don't. Of the Columbia campus at Christmas time we get: "White Christmas lights hang from trees on campus in strange constellations." It's simple-minded, straight observation. But she's not Sally Bowles, she's not supposed to be a camera. She is meant to be more than a vessel for objectivity.

While hiking ocean cliffs in California, her sister sees a seal. "I stare out into the toothpaste-blue ocean." This is description for its own sake, just the proliferation of words. Unless it's a very odd ocean (which it isn't), or very oceanic toothpaste (ditto), such stuff does little to vivify the scene.

Coming home from a night of drinking with a friend in New York "We stop by a twenty-four hour bagel place. . . . We ask how bagels are made. We get a tour." *We* don't, though. Wandering drunk through a bagel store late at night should be something—but it isn't.

And Now You Can Go is a slim book, but I don't think slimness should be confused with efficiency. It's just lost opportunity.

In the Philippines, Vida tries a little harder, but not much. Ellis goes to a cockfight, and the thing gets maybe five or six sentences. Cockfighting is brilliant, vivid, crazy stuff, and we don't see a lick of it in this book.

Ellis goes on a date to a restaurant called Fish. It's on 110th Street, and it is a nice-looking place. It has white and blue motif, I think, it has solarium-type sidewalk seating, it's a wealth of descriptive possibility. Ellis doesn't eat fish, but when says she's "always wanted to come here," she doesn't bother to tell us why. She doesn't bother with how any Columbia student walks by that place all the time, and it looks inviting, Mediterranean, fun. It's slightly too expensive for a student, though. It's a place you want to eat, but not a place you do. She doesn't bother conveying any details.

Perhaps she doesn't bother because it is all trope. Ellis has always wanted to come there, because she's always wanted to like fish—metaphorically. This is Vida's over-the-top metaphor for connecting to the Christian spirit of forgiveness. She's always wanted to be closer to Jesus. Throughout the book, as she gets closer to forgiving, and therefore closer to healed, she eats more fish. All the depth of a What Would Jesus Do bracelet.

Her healing is what this book is all about. Forgive and you shall be healed is the moral of the story.

Why, then, is the soon to be ex-boyfriend in so much trouble?

> "I wonder how long it will take you to get over this," he says.
>
> I sit up. The sheet is tucked under my armpits, the way actresses cover their breasts in movies. "That was not the right thing to say," I tell him.

But wasn't it? Isn't that what this book is about? Isn't that exactly what Ellis is asking us? Why didn't she just say "about 190 pages"?

It is frightening/exhilarating to review Heidi Julavits and Vendela Vida at once.

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They work together editing the magazine *The Believer*, an offshoot, or subsidiary, or fiefdom, or whatever, of Dave Eggers's *McSweeney's*. Julavits made a splash with a long essay in *The Believer* about "snarky" book reviewers. It's a brilliant maneuver (somehow reminiscent of Eggers's own self-deprecation, whereby criticizing him becomes mean and unnecessary because he's already so self-consciously down on himself). What an excellent defense against bad reviews. Clive James tried to point out how useful it can be to defend civilization in *The New York Times*, as a direct response to Julavits. Julavits claimed that her objection is to "a scornful, knowing tone frequently employed to mask an actual lack of information about books" and not to useful negative reviews.

The rub is this: once you've established that some reviews are only scornful and ignorant, it is pretty easy to blur that line. Now, you've got a shorthand for the argument. They run a website, a kind of "Letters to the editor" for all publications. If you object to a review, you just send in a comment about it, they post it on their website, and call it snarky.

Which makes it all the more disappointing that I enjoyed Heidi Julavits's *The Effect of Living Backwards* so thoroughly.[3] Alice is on a plane with her sister Edith that is hijacked. Actually, it seems to have been "hijacked." The sisters were on their way to Morocco, where Edith is going to marry a man she calls X (these heavy-handed Nabokovian jokes are delightful—that the man, for all his individuality, is just a figure in an algebraic formula, Edith plus X equals . . .). Now, they are trapped in a standoff between two factions of the International Institute for Terrorist Studies in Lucerne. One group, the Incursionists, believes in direct, violent anti-terrorist activity. The other, the Brain Worms, believes that terrorists should be negotiated with, talked too, kept talking.

But a plane that is hijacked as an academic exercise is still a hijacked plane, right?

Alice asks her negotiator (she's fallen for him) "is this a test? Or real life?"

"If you can tell me the difference, you're a smarter man than I."

Later, when Alice is enrolled, she and her classmates wait in the Curtis Fishbeiner Lecture Hall for forty-five minutes before the Director of the Institute shows up in a corduroy suit and tells them that their test has been moved to Room 33 because the lecture hall was scheduled to be painted "a brighter shade of ecru."

The students shuffle to the new room, and are given their multiple-choice tests, "a hundred questions, easy. It concluded with an innocently posed extra credit question: What color were the original walls in the Curtis Fishbeiner Lecture Hall?" Ninety-three percent of the students happily, confidently, fill in the little bubble indicating ecru.

The walls of the lecture hall had been a "vitamin-pill shade of pink." They all fail, and are chastised for their "willingness to accept as fact the claims of an authoritative man in a corduroy suit."

You can't trust people. You can't trust that things are what you assume they are. Alice has stepped through the looking glass, and found herself in a world as confusing as the jam tomorrow and jam yesterday world of her literary namesake.

Understanding that the entire world is upside down, that topsy-turvy is the truth, is the lesson that Alice learns.

Through the adventure of the hijacking, Alice will find herself. Before the hijacking, she was a social-work school dropout: "the product of one divorced academic family, various embassy school systems, two state colleges, three-quarters of an overpriced graduate program, and a long-humiliating indoctrination by the American restaurant service industry."

The catastrophe catalyzes her. She begins to understand her relationship with her sister. The sisters are competitive and witty, and Julavits does a good job of having them

3 *The Effect of Living Backwards*, by Heidi Julavits; Putnam, 325 pages, $23.95.

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love and loathe one another at the same time.

Alice finds what she should be doing with her life: studying at the Institute.

There are, throughout, little gems.

"What is it about the cruel that renders them trustworthy?" wonders Alice. "Because cruelty has become synonymous with honesty, compassion with chicanery?"

Julavits slips these shrewd social observations into the mouths of her characters; she never editorializes herself.

"I am so exhausted by this notion that you can find something essentially true about yourself in an unknown place that you cannot find in a known one," says one of the captives. It is refreshing to read a novel in which even the caricatures—the hostages are weird and complicated, but flat—are allowed to say things that ring true and pulse with intelligence. Julavits is the only writer I've read in a long time who is comfortable enough with her own intelligence to spread it around. She is not afraid to have her characters say things that might be right, even if they aren't The Smartest Character in the Book (i.e. the one most like the author).

This business of authorial generosity has a lot to do with why I found myself muttering, "Why am I not liking *The Furies*?[4] I should like it. Look, for instance, at all this city, look at all this New York." Fernanda Eberstadt has written a big, city-embracing book in which boy meets girl. Gwen meets Gideon.

> Gwen lived in an Upper West Side luxury high-rise that, like an ocean liner, had a name.
>
> Gwen's was called the Vanderveer.
>
> The Vanderveer had brass revolving doors, a dark green polished marble lobby, doormen in gold braid, and a health club in the basement, which she'd never visited.

She subsists on takeout sushi. Her Sub Zero contains nothing but buffalo grass vodka (she knows her vodka, she works at rehabilitating the former Soviet Union to vibrant capitalism, it's 1995), ice cream, and condiments: things that don't spoil.

Gideon, the puppeteer Gwen meets in Russia, is "long-limbed, bearded, vaguely hippiesh, in a purple Grateful Dead T-shirt," and lives downtown with his co-puppeteer Dina, and Dina's son.

The Monkey Bar, Lansky Lounge, Bemelman's.

> Poor, poor. Community gardens. An empty lot turned basketball court. Another one, where hot-dog vendors store their wagons.
>
> West, in the splattering rain—just before you reach the formerly Jewish, now Hispanic wholesale garment district—you hit the newly chic strip of Ludlow Street, a place much favored by recent college graduates, children of the suburbs playing ragamuffin.

She knows E.A.T., and she knows the "retro-grunge health food luncheonette, kitted out in turquoise vinyl armchairs, formica tables, mismatched furniture from a yard sale."

Giuliani is threatening the Lower East side building, where Gideon's company works. He and his landlord Sancho are on a "mission to expel the legions of Stargap and Bananabucks." That building in real life housed Charas and was just on the east side of Tompkins Square.

Eberstadt has got New York's number. She knows this town cold.

Further to the book's credit, it is sexy—so much so you find yourself a little embarrassed to be reading it on the subway sometimes, hoping no one is reading over your shoulder while the two love birds graphically cavort.

It is a classic story. Boy and girl come together despite, because of, their differences. She's a slick, uptown girl with money in the bank. He's a bohemian. He lives downtown.

I should enjoy this. But no. Something isn't working.

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4 *The Furies*, by Fernanda Eberstadt; Knopf, 464 pages, $26.

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Fernanda Eberstadt has written a *Beautiful and the Damned* for the nineties. The Patch marriage of Fitzgerald's book dissolved into, or because of, a vicious, superficial hedonism. They were doomed. But Fitzgerald poured it on. They were witty, pretty people. He made their jokes funny; he made their insights insightful. He gave them the best he had.

Fernanda Eberstadt, one realizes, won't give it up.

These people are contemptible. They don't say anything even remotely clever. They are line drawings of what Eberstadt wants to convey. Their jobs, for example, think how perfect they are: What is goofier, more absurdly bohemian than puppeteer? Even if he was a folk-singer we might suspect he was good at it, we might sympathize with his career. She isn't just a capitalist; she's a capitalist missionary. Her job is to spread the gospel of money. Eberstadt likes her polarities, and she likes them a lot more than her characters.

The marriage declines and these two start to *Whose-Afraid-of-Virginia-Woolf* one another. What did we think was going to happen? The first time she saw him he was sprawled on a bench in Central Park and she thought he was homeless; she was going to the Carlyle with a friend. It's not wrenching to us, we've never liked them. Eberstadt's never liked them.

Gwen says, "No, this is worse than the usual . . . buildup of domestic resentment. . . . I don't believe in him anymore. I think he's fake. A hollow man."

We can only agree.

The only person Eberstadt likes in her book is herself. She inserts herself into the text all over the place. She editorializes, she essays, she hurls parenthetical asides around as if they were going out of style. She even pops into the dialogue.

Eberstadt claims, parenthetically, "Three-quarters of the art in the world has been produced by men who grew up trying to make their mothers laugh."

She drops it in, her own opinion. Somehow we are supposed to glide by these assertions, her obvious, plain as the nose on your face, prejudices about which aspect of her characters is right, and which wrong. It's as if she started the book with a list of pros and cons. Like that Frank O'Hara poem where he lists the things his group likes and doesn't like. X but not Y.

All this makes the city, as wonderfully rendered as it is here, feel like nothing more than a hook upon which Eberstadt can hang her prejudices.

Jonathan Lethem, author of *The Fortress of Solitude*, has long been a blurrer of genre.[5] He is a literato who writes detectives, although quirky ones (his PI in *Motherless Brooklyn* has Tourette's), he has written a Science Fiction Western, he wrote about a physicist who fell for a black hole (it had personality, this void).

He has chucked all those things, that playfulness that made him popular, and gone for it. He's attempted the big book.

This book revolves around a motherless Brooklyn (it's as if he was inspired by his own title). Rachel and Abraham Edbus move to what is known as Gowanus, but will shortly be renamed Boerum Hill, with their son Dylan. Abraham is working on a film, painting each individual cell, which he will never finish. Rachel is working on her liberal radicalism, her pack of cigarettes, and her stash of marijuana. While Dylan is still young, Rachel leaves them.

Abraham continues to paint. He is absorbed by it. They live like two men in the big brownstone.

Dylan's best friend is named Mingus. His mother is gone, too. His father was a musician, now sinking into cocaine addiction and anonymity.

Dylan and Mingus.

The psychological landscape of their childhood in Brooklyn is wonderfully written. Lethem captures the world of children well.

Red Hook, Fort Green, Atlantic Terminals.

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5 *The Fortress of Solitude*, by Jonathan Lethem; Doubleday, 528 pages, $26.

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You built up associations, which would pass for understanding. Nobody was explaining anything. Fifth grade was an abstract art.

Dylan is a victim of frequent "yokings," a kind of friendly mugging, a shakedown.

The fact of it: he'd cross the street to have his pockets emptied. The outcome was obvious anyway. He'd cross magnetized in disgrace, under the sway of an implicit yoking. . . . It was a dance, steps traced in yokes gone by. *Call me white boy and I'll hand you a dollar spontaneously, I'm good at this now.*

"Just come here for a minute, man, I ain't gonna hurt you. What you gotta be afraid for? *Dang*, man. You think I'm gonna hurt you?"

No. Yes.

The logic was insane, except as a polyrhythm of fear and reassurance, a seduction. "What you afraid of? You a *racist* man?"

Me?

We yoke you for thinking that we might: in your eyes we see that you come pre-yoked.

Your fear makes it our duty to prove you right.

Racial tension is stretched across *The Fortress of Solitude*. Dylan can never escape it.

Dylan is supposed to be a boy we recognize, a smart kid. He gets out of his anonymous public school and goes to one with a name: Stuyvesant. Lethem is very good at interpersonal subtlety, from the stoop games to high school, to a small liberal arts college in Vermont (yeah, you know, that one—I don't care what they call it, it's always Bennington). He gets the interplay of people just right. He doesn't always get the people. We are told how Dylan is, and we see the dramatic interaction of him and others. But the Dylan we see is timid, scared, and quiet. We read: "Disgusting to realize he was flirting with Arthur's mom, to realize, now that he grokked girls, he'd *always* been flirting with Arthur's mom." This is perfect. The only problem, we never saw him flirt. We've never seen him flirt with anyone. We see him try, through friends, to communicate with a girl, once.

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All of these little things are good, but just as we never really get to know Dylan, when you pull back from the book and look at its big themes, its macro-topics, it begins to fall apart.

The book considers the gentrification of Boerum Hill. But it doesn't so much as consider it as it announces it. Eberstadt shows how wonderful a really detailed telling of New York can be, as have many others. Lethem's telling just doesn't engage.

Dylan meets his old friend Arthur Lomb "at a restaurant balled Berlin, on Smith at the corner of Baltic."

> The place was one of a run of glossy new restaurants and boutiques on the old Hispanic strip, dotted in among the botanicas and social clubs, and the shuttered outlets full of dusty plastic furniture and out-of-date appliances. Abraham had tried to explain it a dozen times, but there was no understanding until I saw with my own eyes: impoverished Smith Street had been converted to an upscale playground.

He's just telling us. There's no descriptive presence to it, no surprise. We take it, because we know it's true, but Lethem has brought less to the picture than we could have gathered from the "So you want to move to . . . Boerum Hill" section of *The New York Times*.

At least the part of the story told in Brooklyn is fun. In part two of the book, where the point of view switches to first person, we find ourselves tied to a very whiny Dylan. His character looses all gleam. He becomes just another messed-up guy, trying to keep his girlfriend, confused by his family, and unhappy.

He goes to visit his old friend Mingus in prison. And he brings with him a little piece of superfluous magical realism. Long ago, Dylan found a ring that gave him superpowers. He could fly. Later, it turned out, the ring made him invisible. Lethem, hitting us over the head with his metaphors for diversion, has Dylan go into the prison and give his old buddy the ring, so that Mingus can escape.

Lethem wants it both ways: he wants to write a big novel and still be quirky—and I think he should be able to. I do not think he's done it. He has foiled his ambition with low metaphors, and he has soiled his fun with ambition. He has evaded his characters, and rested on their interactions, their society.

Except for Julavits, all of the writers here are stingy and condescending. They box their characters up. They loathe them. They write books about the flailings of idiots. Writers have come to believe that it is their job to expose the absurdity of life, the idiocy of our fellow man. They refuse to celebrate. They refuse to embrace. Novels were founded, *Joseph Andrews* for instance, to prove and explore psychology. Novelists were not afraid to put folks better than themselves into their books. The homely wrote of the beautiful, the artistic wrote of scientists, the drunk wrote of the sober and vice versa (okay, I have no proof of the last one). Today, it seems that writers will only imagine people lesser than themselves.

Condescension doesn't make good literature. Only Julavits has the guts. Only Julavits has enough confidence in her own intelligence to spread some around. Her characters can say things that are true, and still be mendacious. She wants to explore her characters, her world. The only thing the rest of them want to explore (aside from porn, comic books, or social gradations in New York City) is how horrendous, selfish, and small everyone is.

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Books

The art of art history

by Michael J. Lewis

The modern sensibility recoils against the "great man" model of history: history as the account of decisive events, shaped by the autonomous actions of kings, princes, and generals. This is history as Shakespeare viewed it, where the great constants of legitimacy and succession perennially give rise to conflict, ever changing as the infinite permutations of duty, honor, and ambition act differently upon different men. In place of this, history has come to be taught "from below," as the record of inexorable and implacable social and economic forces, acting collectively and impersonally. Its high drama is less likely to be that of a decisive cavalry charge as a notable leap in crop yield, or the slow contraction of the perimeter of a dying language.

The field of art history has followed suit. In 1951 Arnold Hauser's *Social History of Art* looked at art in terms of its patronage, shifting the focus from the supply side, as it were, to the demand. Hauser was deeply shaped by Marxist historiography, and he came to the unsurprising conclusion that the history of art, like everything else, was the story of class conflict. This insight, shorn of its explicit Marxism, has become the conventional wisdom and a generation has been taught to look at works of art in their social context first and in their aesthetic dimension secondarily—if at all.

At a dinner party recently, a graduate student upbraided a distinguished colleague of mine for using the word *masterpiece*: "We no longer call a painting a masterpiece; we call it a *success*." This substitution reflects more than mere prudery over sexist language. The former term belongs to a mental world in which works of art are the product of intelligent artists, working at the highest level of skill, while the latter term suggests something fortunate but inadvertent, like the winning of a lottery.

But it has proven easier to dislodge George Washington than Michelangelo. Art stubbornly remains the province of "great men," for the making of a painting or statue is an individual act in which the most personal of qualities are at play: visual imagination, dexterity and control, the ineffable and inimitable quality of "touch." Vast social and economic forces may help disseminate a new movement in art—or prepare a society to receive it—but they cannot bring it into being. If this were the case, Nazi Germany would have produced art of enduring value. Ultimately, it is the artist of personal talent who devises a new visual sensibility, like Michelangelo's *terribilità* or Caravaggio's play of light and gloom, which at first stupefies and then conquers an entire generation of followers. In the end it comes down to those quintessentially Shakespearean concerns: lineage, succession, and authority.

Here is the value of Paul Johnson's *Art: A New History*,[1] a spacious survey of art that

1 *Art: A New History*, by Paul Johnson; Harper Collins, 777 pages, $39.95.

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restores the creative artist to the epicenter of art history. Johnson is the English journalist and popular historian whose works include *Modern Times* and *A History of the Jews*. He is no art historian—indeed, this book could not have been written by an art historian—but something better, a historian who is also a painter (who was taught by his father, an artist and director of an art school). In other words, he has faced the same aesthetic and technical challenges as the artists he treats, which gives his thoughts on the nature of artistic creativity a rare and bracing urgency.

At first glance *Art: A New History* resembles such standard textbooks as Ernst Gombrich's *The Story of Art* or H. W. Janson's *History of Art*, first published in 1962 and now in a sixth, massively expanded edition. Like these books, Johnson too begins with Paleolithic cave painting, proceeding in turn through ancient Egypt, classical antiquity, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and so forth right into the contemporary world. He likewise identifies the key works, giving capsule biographies of the decisive figures and sketching the religious, cultural, and economic backdrop against which they worked. What differs is the voice, which for Johnson is everything. Instead of the cool impersonal tone of the survey, he writes with a distinctive personal voice that is by turns cranky, charming, and inspiring. He also has an impish love of provoking. After all, this is a man who once wrote in his *Spectator* column that he hung an oversized, luridly violent Spanish crucifixion in the vestibule of his house because he liked to "terrify his protestant visitors." The result is a general survey that can be read, cover to cover, for pleasure (if tempered with occasional exasperation).

Johnson is unafraid of "great man" history. In his view, art history is a story of alternation between "intervals of canonical calm" and occasional "climactic moments" in which radically creative innovators are thrust to the forefront. The account of these innovators—"gifted, obstinate, willful"—forms the heart of this book. It is a model peculiarly suited to Johnson's discursive style, love of the telling anecdote, and chatty biographical asides. Having no official consensus to defend, Johnson ranges freely across the span of art, contemplating and pondering at will. He lavishes time on artists who intrigue him (such as the little-known Swedish realist Anders Zorn) and utterly ignores art that bores him (such as the wall art of Roman Pompeii, which he writes off as "dull and commonplace").

Nor does he shy away from pronouncements of the most magisterial sort. After a thoughtful and subtle appreciation of Egyptian art, whose intellectual rigor he admires, he turns to the art of the Ancient Near East, with its ziggurats and arrogant palaces. These he dismisses for their bombast and monotonous swagger, artistic overcompensation of insecure and precarious kingdoms. From this he extracts a moral that is one of the leitmotifs of the book: "a serious artistic weakness is often the external, visible sign of political, economic, and social weakness."

For all his critical bludgeoning, Johnson has an unaffected and almost naïve curiosity about the great questions: the essential nature of art, its ultimate origins, its psychological function. He speculates that art reflects the "ordering instinct which makes society possible, and [is] essential to human happiness." It is not a luxury nor the product of civilization at all, but a primal human activity, perhaps even the first profession, as he speculates in his fascinating first chapter on Paleolithic cave painting. This was an art system of continental scope, with 277 documented sites across Europe, and daunting technical complexity, requiring massive scaffolding like that once notched into the walls of the caves at Lascaux.

Johnson makes great claims for this art, arguing that it preceded not only writing but perhaps speech as well, its images providing visual aids to articulate sound: "The evolving genetic coding which made humans rationalise themselves into art was

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the same force which produced rational speech noises, so that the two processes were intimately connected from the start."

Speculative, to be sure, but what subject is more deserving of intelligent speculation than the dawn of art? And unlike most art historians, Johnson has actually seen most of the art that he writes about. He is exceptionally well traveled, better by far than virtually any art historian, and has seen much inaccessible art. When he writes about the startling multi-colored masonry of the remote churches of Armenia or the architectural sculpture of the Mayans, it is the palpable aesthetic encounter that is paramount. Here Johnson is at his best, and here he differs most from standard surveys of art.

But Johnson's heart lies in painting, and it is when discussing the achievements of the great oil painters, from the fifteenth through the nineteenth centuries, that he finds his mark. He has a particular affinity for landscape artists, those who tackle the perennial challenges of light, atmospherics, and space. For this reason he devotes much attention to painters of the American landscape and the West, such as Cole, Church, and Bierstadt. His chapter on the watercolor, that minor English art that had a major effect on nineteenth-century painting, is particularly valuable. Johnson shows how the watercolor spread, arousing global interest in landscape, permitting a "more subtle and accurate study" of nature—which had a great liberating affect on the further course of nineteenth-century art. He shows that important figures such as Delacroix and Géricault were decisively affected by their encounter with the English watercolor tradition. And he also calls attention to neglected watercolor masters, such as the tragic Thomas Girtin, about whom Turner said, "If Tom Girtin had lived, I would have starved."

In such a wide-ranging account, there are the inevitable errors: Eakins taught at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, not the Philadelphia Academy; the completion of Cologne Cathedral began in 1840, not 1823, when the existing choir was restored. And the photographs here are not always well coordinated with the text. Works of art are discussed in depth but not shown; others are illustrated but not discussed. As a skilled journalist, Johnson has thought his book through in narrative terms and not as a visual sequence.

Yet his book achieves a wonderful visual freshness. He was not hobbled by the fear of leaving something important out, and he makes room for less well-known works, such as the Russian painter Ilya Repin's haunting *They Did Not Expect Him* (1884). Here a gaunt and hesitant figure, just returned from years of Siberian exile, moves haltingly into the circle of his stunned family. Johnson pronounces it as one of the great paintings of the nineteenth century, and the case he makes is not bad.

Most readers will find Johnson's account of modern art, the art of the past seventy years or so, perplexing. Here he has less to say about individual artists than the changed circumstances under which art is produced. In fact, for the second half of the twentieth century, works by only four painters are illustrated (although many more are discussed): Jackson Pollock, Andrew Wyeth, Magritte, and a Soviet propagandist named Korzhev! Johnson justifies this perversity by making a distinction between fine art—art concerned with the creation of beauty—from fashion art—art "concerned with conformity to social rule." For him, most of twentieth-century art can be explained as fashion art, which serves a certain consumer function but is emphatically not connected to that primal search for order.

His account of twentieth-century professional events is vivid, as might be expected from one who grew up within that world. He points out that the abolition of art academies in the late nineteenth century did not produce freedom for the artist, for most artists live a life of hardscrabble penury. In fact, these academies worked to help sell artist's paintings, for which they claimed a tiny commission. Without these academies acting as intermediaries, the modern artist is

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at the mercy of the dealer, whose commission is likely to be sixty percent or more.

Fascinating thoughts, but it still does not add up to a history of twentieth-century art. For this reason alone, *Art: A New History* will not be embraced by art historians. Already *Publisher's Weekly* has assailed it for its "pure *New Criterion*-style cultural conservatism," belittling Johnson as a "conservative gadfly and Sunday painter." But his book deserves a wide popular audience, and it will find it. For all its quirky pronouncements and eccentric digressions, Johnson has produced that rarest of objects, a contemporary book about art whose most striking quality is that it is humane.

Reasonable science

Susan Haack
Defending Science—Within Reason: Between Scientism and Cynicism.
Prometheus Books, 396 pages, $28

reviewed by James Franklin

There are, Susan Haack says, two opposing schools of thought about science: the New Cynics, as she calls them, who believe science is a shabby social construct of the ruling class, and the Old Deferentialists, who believe science has a uniquely rational method of reaching the truth. Her plan is to steer a middle course between the two. She pursues this plan across a wide field of issues, a much broader spectrum than is found in traditional philosophy of science or sociology of science books—including, for example, expert scientific evidence in law as well as old chestnuts like religion and science. She writes throughout with the verve of her *Manifesto of a Passionate Moderate* (1998), and with attention to well-chosen and short examples of real science. She shares with us many juicy aperçus from her reading. One will not soon forget her recurrent use, as a diagnostic tool for some of the less sane pronouncements of the irrationalists, of J. L. Austin's dictum, "There's the part where he says it, and the part where he takes it back."

Haack is convincing on many of the issues. On the sociology of science, she effortlessly exposes the conceptual confusions and internal inconsistencies of those modern enemies of science who think knowledge is "socially constructed" in the sense that it is a power play not subject to any norms of honest inquiry or respect for evidence. But she does not agree with the more hard-headed scientists who think sociology is a swamp from which nothing good can emerge. She shows well how the norms of the scientific community, like peer review, intensive training, and the preservation of scientific research in libraries, lead (fallibly, but by and large) to the weeding out of error and the real improvement of theories. The present controversy over refereeing standards, and whether fabulously wealthy scientific journals can expect a high standard of refereeing without paying scientists anything for it, concerns sociological questions, and it matters for the health and credibility of science.

Haack negotiates well the minefield of the differences or otherwise between the natural and the social sciences (well-trodden minefield might be the apt metaphor, except for its suggestion that the mines are no longer there). The requirements of honest and disinterested inquiry are the same in all kinds of science, and for that matter in common sense and in solving crossword puzzles. If some of the evidence in the social sciences concerns human intentions, that is a way in which they differ from the natural sciences, but there is no need to exaggerate the difference that makes. If the social sciences are poor at prediction, meteorology is nothing to write home about either. On law and science, Haack is well-informed and clear-headed on the recent attempts of American courts to deal with problems of expert scientific testimony, where, as Learned Hand put it, we set the jury "to decide, where doctors disagree." (And we set a scientifically untrained judge to decide what the jury may safely hear.)

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A rarely discussed but important issue to which Haack directs attention is the relation of scientific language and what C. S. Peirce called "real generals," the causally important properties of things with which scientific terminology should align itself. Logicians once preferred the example "All swans are white." At a certain point, difficulties arose from some black birds discovered by Dutch explorers on the way to the Indies and it was necessary to make a quick switch to "All ravens are black." But perhaps with a better marketing department they could have kept to the original? It only requires a shift in terminology to dismiss the swimming ravens of New Holland as a new kind of bird of no significance for generalizations about *swans*. What is wrong with a ploy of that sort? Haack explains the need for scientific classifications to stay attentive to clusters of characteristics that are found to co-occur. Black swans are very like white swans in nearly all respects except color, which is a property found to be of generally low significance in biological classification. Calling them ravens is dishonest. As Haack writes of the ideal of objectivity in science, it is less a matter of technique than of character.

The eirenic or moderate plan of the book is less successful on the more basic issue of what makes science rational. Who are the "extreme" defenders of scientific rationality, and what is wrong with them? For several centuries, the more intransigent friends of science have had a consistent story to tell. It is in terms of probability, conceived as a species of logic. Just as "all ravens are black and this is a raven" makes it logically certain that this is black, so "99 percent of ravens are black and this is a raven" makes it logically highly probable that this is black (in the absence of further relevant evidence). That is why the results of drug trials give users rational confidence in the effects of drugs.

Galileo and Kepler used the language of objective probability about the way evidence supported their theories, and in the last hundred years a number of books have filled out the theory of logical probability—Keynes's *Treatise on Probability* (the great work of his youth, before he went on to easier pickings in economics), D. C. Williams's *Ground of Induction*, Polya's *Mathematics and Plausible Reasoning*, and, just published in 2003, E. T. Jaynes's posthumous masterpiece, *Probability Theory: The Logic of Science*. These works emphasize the continuity between scientific and commonsense reasoning: the legal standard of "proof beyond reasonable doubt" that a jury of ordinary citizens must evaluate is of the same nature as the relation between a scientific theory and observation. That is, it is a purely logical relation between a body of evidence and a conclusion.

Philosophers of science and other commentators of a humanist bent have been very unwilling to notice this tradition. Probability theorists suspect that the reason for this is a simple one—that humanists hate numbers. To alleviate this difficulty, they explained that exact numbers were beside the point, and that "proof beyond reasonable doubt," for example, is not a precise probability but needs only the imprecise quantity "very high," which even jurors can understand. Polya explained that the main point of the admittedly somewhat complex Bayes theorem, which has as many as a dozen symbols, is contained in its simple corollary, "A theory is confirmed by its consequences." (So, if a detective's theory that the butler did it implies that the knife is behind the sofa, and the knife is found behind the sofa, then the theory is more likely than it was before.) To no avail: however qualitative and wordy the mush was made, humanists were not eating it up.

Haack is in this respect on the humanist side. Keynes, Williams, Polya, and Jaynes are not mentioned, and the two members of the school who are, Rudolf Carnap and Mary Hesse, are criticized for idiosyncrasies they do not share with the mainstream. Whenever she wishes to damn the view that the relation of evidence to conclusion is a matter of logic, Haack uses the phrase "syn-

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tactically characterizable logic." The view that logic should all be syntactically characterizable, that is, done by manipulating uninterpreted symbols the way a computer does, is a narrow one. It was popular in the first half of the twentieth century but not otherwise, and it is no part of the probabilists' theory of logic. It is especially surprising to see such a narrow view of logic here, given that the classic work on the wider field of logic and the difficulties of saying what exactly counts as logic and what not, is Haack's own *Deviant Logic, Fuzzy Logic* (1974, second ed. 1996).

There is one issue on which Haack is anything but moderate. Religion brings out the extremist in her, and she is keen to revive the theory of Victorian books like Draper's *History of the Conflict between Science and Religion* that science and religion are incompatible and that science is right. It is not easy to see where the incompatibility of science and religion lies, since on the face of it they are talking about different things. Nor does it become entirely clear what propositions exactly Haack thinks religion asserts and science denies. She does complain, with some reason, about the religious *attitude* to belief, on the grounds that faith is an immoral attribution of certainty to beliefs for which one knows one does not have full evidence. Nevertheless, it is hard to believe certainty is a central part of most believers' faith—common experience, surely, is that most religious are less certain of their beliefs than most atheists are of theirs. Haack attacks adequately some soft creationist targets, but most believers are not creationists.

The heart of the conflict, it seems, concerns matters of value. Does science speak on this matter? According to Haack, it does. She quotes approvingly Stephen Hawking's view, "We are such insignificant creatures on a minor planet of a very average star in the outer suburbs of one of a hundred thousand million galaxies. So it is difficult to believe in a God that would care about us." There is a "deep tension," she says "between a scientific picture of a vast and uncaring universe, and the religious idea of a caring and involved God." One is surprised to see "insignificant" and "uncaring" listed as scientific properties, and wonders which science is devoted to their study. (Geometry, perhaps? Size, vast or minor, seems to be the only property mentioned as relevant to significance.)

If the universe is uncaring, religious believers are even worse, Haack thinks. She quotes indignantly the religious philosopher Richard Swinburne's statement, "I am fortunate if the natural possibility of my suffering if you choose to hurt me is the vehicle that makes the choice really matter" and adds

> the same day I read this I also read an article by a woman who had been raped, sodomized, terrorized, beaten, and left for dead by a gang of thugs. Can you accept that she was benefited by having been the vehicle that make her attackers' choice really matter?—I can't.

I can't either, but I wonder if Haack is entitled to so much indignation, given her view of human significance. The view, namely, that humans are the same kind of things as galaxies, whose destruction is a mere firework. If science shows humans are too insignificant for a God to care about, why all the anger at God's failure to prevent injury to them?

Haack leaves us with a useful picture of scientific inquiry as like a crossword puzzle. Some clues are as yet lightly pencilled in, a few conflict, some are firm and well-supported by a matrix of others. Solvers have guesses that often agree, but sometimes their differing bodies of prior knowledge pull them towards different hypotheses. It is a model that emphasizes the continuity between scientific and ordinary reasoning. The continuity was confirmed dramatically when researchers on infant cognition rushed to labor wards to film newborns, and on analysis of the tapes found the babies were

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studying them back—with, indeed, less background knowledge, but with much the same methodology. That methodology, including, for example, the confirmation of theory by consequence, is only intelligible if it is itself independent of the way the world is, that is, it is logic.

Hope without feathers

Gustaw Herling The Noonday Cemetery and Other Stories, translated by Bill Johnston. New Directions, 282 pages, $25.95

reviewed by Tess Lewis

Gustaw Herling faced more suffering and depravity in two years than many men encounter in a lifetime. Yet he never lost his fascination for the fine line that separates hope and despair, or for the complex interaction of good and evil that can shape even the most ordinary of lives. "The human organism is an unfathomable machine," he wrote several years after his release from a Soviet labor camp. Nevertheless, until his death in 2000, Herling sought, with grace, eloquence, and discretion, to plumb the depths of this organism he saw pushed to the extremes of degradation and exaltation.

In 1940, the twenty-year-old Herling, an idealistic student at Warsaw University, tried to cross the border from Soviet-occupied Poland into the area occupied by the Germans in order to fight the Nazis, then Russia's allies. Caught by the NKVD, Herling was first sent to Vitebsk prison, then sentenced to five years in the Yercevo camp. When Hitler breached his nonaggression pact with Stalin, almost all of the Polish prisoners in the Gulag were granted amnesty so that they could fight alongside the Red Army. Herling and five other Poles in Yercevo, however, were passed over. They remained imprisoned in political limbo for several months until they forced the camp authorities' hands by staging a hunger strike. The irony of this strike defies the imagination. All around Herling, thousands of men and women were dying of hunger each year, and yet the authorities, perhaps astounded by the Polish prisoners' audacity, ceded to their demands and eventually released four of them.

The dispassionate tone of *A World Apart* (1951), Herling's gripping memoir of his time in the Gulag, underscores the moral authority of his account by conveying the horror he endured and witnessed without sensationalism or sentimentality. At one point Herling describes his observations about his fellow prisoners' behavior as "so objective and so indifferent even to pain." But they are not. His outrage, sorrow, and compassion are implicit in every sentence. Yet he is wary of judging even those prisoners whose actions, in any other circumstances, would be considered objectively wrong. "I became convinced," he explains, "that a man can be human only under human conditions, and I believe that it is fantastic nonsense to judge him by actions which he commits under inhuman conditions." Herling's wrath is reserved for those who consign others to the depths of man-made Hells like the Gulag or the Inquisition.

After the War, Herling eventually settled in Naples. He helped found the influential émigré journal *Kultura*, for which he wrote regular installments of his six-volume literary diary, *Journal Written at Night*. In Herling's *Journal*, reflections on history as well as on current political and cultural events alternate with short stories, "true" and fictionalized autobiography, and literary and art criticism. Yet his many subjects lead to his main concern: the human condition and its uneasy balance between the poles of faith and reason, hope and despair, isolation and community.

Herling's fiction is similarly oriented. The joys and ravages of solitude are the unifying theme of Herling's three novellas collected in *The Island* (1993). The main characters in these novellas—a priest unable to bear the burden of his vocation, a stone mason mutilated in what appears to be a workplace

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accident, the leper from de Maistre's *Le Lépreux de la cité d'Aoste* who is confined alone in a tower for many years, and a young priest tortured for heresy—all suffer protracted ordeals of physical and spiritual isolation. Like so much of the suffering Herling has described elsewhere, theirs is without inherent meaning. Some are purified and made stronger by their trials, others succumb. Forces of evil, whether manifested as crimes among men or as natural catastrophes, relentlessly buffet well-intentioned, but flawed individuals. Yet it is not all slings and arrows. Herling's accomplishment, aside from the spare beauty of his prose, lies in complex and contradictory depictions of man's "innate wretchedness, entangled with the eternal, yet eternally unsatisfied, yearning for holiness."

With the thirteen stories collected in *The Noonday Cemetery*, Herling's focus shifts to the seeds of evil that have taken root within his characters and blossom mysteriously with ambiguous results. Henry James and, more particularly, the governess in *The Turn of the Screw*, are this volume's guiding spirits. Whether she actually saw "the spirits of Evil, victorious specters from beyond the grave" or suffered hallucinations is irrelevant to the narrator of these stories. Important, rather, is that she possessed the "different gaze of the initiated" who can see into the aura of mystery that envelops human affairs but is invisible to most. And the affairs recounted in this collection are murky indeed.

Herling's plot lines border on the melodramatic, but the sparseness of his style and his respect for plausibility counterbalance any excesses of circumstance. In the title story, a double suicide—or murder and suicide—fascinates the narrator to the point of obsession but his investigation remains inconclusive. In "The Exorcist's Brief Confession," the narrator comes upon the diary of a priest who, overcome with righteous fury or some more lurid passion, appears to have mauled a young girl whose spirit he was to have healed. But a heart attack cuts the priest's written confession short. In another story, the narrator's search for a reliquary thought to have once contained Barabbas's tooth leads to an investigation of heretical theories about the pardoned thief's fate. Was he Jesus's Manichean double? And what would have come of Christ's teachings if Pontius Pilate had not released Barabbas as the crowd demanded, but pardoned Jesus instead?

There is a void at the center of most of these stories: an ancient document crumbles to dust before the narrator can decipher its secret; a confession is heard, but is too terrible to relate; criminal investigations are closed due to lack of evidence. There are also occasional vivid but unreliable dreams or visions that provide important clues. Some are truly horrifying, others slyly ironic, such as the narrator's glimpse, he believes, of the spirit of a fifteenth-century nobleman stepping out of his portrait and giving a swift kick to an errant descendant.

"The Noonday Cemetery" provides as clear an artistic credo as Herling articulated. Rejecting Proust's motto to "See clearly but in rapture" as a rationale for indulging in a "brilliantly executed showpiece for the theatrical affectation of the salon," the narrator proposes instead that we "see clearly . . . not in rapture, though, but in bewilderment and terror." Such extremes, however, are not ground for prurience. He demands writers exercise "restraint—artistic discretion, even—in their attempts to peer into the depths of the human soul." And most importantly, they must resist the attempt to clarify and explain, lest too definite a resolution reduce their tale to a mere "accumulation of bizarre trivialities." Essential truths are not free of mystery.

The stories in *The Noonday Cemetery* breathe the same rarified atmosphere as the novels of W. G. Sebald. The earliest story, "The Eyetooth of Barabbas," was written in 1990, the same year Sebald's first published novel, *Vertigo*, appeared in Germany, so it would be presumptuous to speak of either writer influencing the other. Yet Herling is decidedly Sebald's Eastern double. In Her-

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ling's stories, a melancholy narrator, at the mercy of a fragile constitution, travels far and wide on quests for "seemingly trivial and inconsequential details" from history. The narrator shares the author's sensibilities, enthusiasms, professional accomplishments, and broad biographical outline, and, with many literary allusions and asides, reconstructs the story of an object or a life that has caught his insatiable curiosity.

These two excavators of the past share many of the same literary and historical touchstones, including Stendhal, Kafka, Conrad, and Casanova. And both are haunted by ghosts. While Sebald is pursued by ghosts of historical catastrophes, Herling is haunted by sinister shades of vaguer origin. And yet, Herling's greater reticence with historical coincidence and the shorter form of his fiction help him avoid the claustrophobia and occasional *longueurs* of Sebald's novels. Deeper penetration into his characters' psyches and motivations lends Herling's fiction a warmer, more intimate tone, though his narrative persona is no more self-revealing than the coyly evasive Sebaldian narrator. Still, the depth of Herling's psychological insight does not clarify so much as it increases the mysteries of the human soul. Such, of course was his intent.

Herling occasionally put his literary ambiguity to very unambiguous ends. Despite his admiration for John Paul II, and his objection to abortion, Herling was appalled by the Pope's appeal, after the Bosnian war, to the pregnant victims of the Bosnian Serb "rape camps" not to seek abortions, but to bear and love the children. He then wrote "Beata Santa," the story of Marianna, a young Polish woman captured in one of the Serbian soldiers's "ethnic dragnets" on a visit to her sister in Bosnia. Obedient to the Church, Marianna prepares to bear the child she now carries. She is unwilling to return to Poland and is taken in by Father Pietro, an Italian priest who spreads word of her serenity and saintly demeanor. The narrator, an exiled Polish journalist living in Naples, befriends her and is asked by the priest to explain Marianna's occasional fits of delirium in which she raves in her native tongue. Her rantings are full of the horror beneath her placid and gentle demeanor, but her friend refuses to reveal her private torment.

Marianna dies after an agonizing delivery. The story is gruesome enough, not to mention heavy-handed, but Herling's critique is more pointed. In a coda, Father Pietro claims to have heard sounds issuing from Marianna's grave, and the Church launches its beatification process with an exhumation. Father Pietro's dreams of Marianna's sainthood are dashed when they find her corpse turned on its side, her face "distorted in a grimace of terror." She had been buried alive, deep in a cataleptic sleep, and therefore her death is not an acceptable one for a martyr.

What makes "Beata Santa" more disturbing than a mere diatribe against the inflexibility and cynical propagandizing of institutionalized religion is the narrator's confession of his deep fascination for Marianna's misfortune and for her imperviousness to the aura of orchestrated "saintliness" with which the Church surrounded her.

> From the moment when I heard her half-sleeping ravings and saw her altered face, I liked her even more for the tangle of conflicting human emotions in her. I did not want her to be a "pure saint" from a lithograph, I wanted her to be a "real saint"—in other words, one who is profoundly tainted.

The story sparked a controversy in the Polish Church and government on the issue of allowing abortions for victims of rape. Beyond its immediate historical and political circumstances, however, "Beata Santa" is of a piece with Herling's other fiction in its exploration of the tenuous survival of good in the face of overwhelming hardship and of the seductive powers of evil.

"When it comes down to it, what is hope?" Herling asks. "Impotent rebellion against despair. Whoever says that one can't live without hope, is simply asserting that

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one cannot live without constant rebellion." Herling's own noble but impotent rebellion over the course of four decades has left us with writing of rare and disturbing beauty.

Cultural horticulture

Karel Čapek The Gardener's Year. The Claridge Press, 208 pages, £12.99

reviewed by Elizabeth Barlow Rogers

There are several categories of books on gardens and gardening: ancient texts such as Virgil's *Georgics* and Pliny the Younger's *Letters* describing his two villas, medieval and Renaissance herbals and treatises, seventeenth-century suites of engraved perspectives and parterre patterns, eighteenth-century works defining and debating competing theories of landscape aesthetics, nineteenth-century encyclopedias and periodicals, twentieth-century manuals and magazines, and —thanks to the invention of color photography—handsome coffee-table volumes depicting the gardens of the world.

There is another kind of book, more difficult to classify, that may contain a great deal of advice and opinions about gardens but which is fundamentally a work of literature about the act of gardening, in other words, a book by the gardener-writer. Sometimes this kind of author is a garden columnist for a newspaper or magazine whose omnium-gatherum is a series of small essays, usually arranged by month or season. Consider in this regard Vita Sackwille-West, whose columns for *The Observer* —which she wrote and subsequently published as *In Your Garden* a half-century ago, the first of a series of similar volumes— remain fresh and lively because they read like conversations with a gardening friend. Striking the wise-amateur-to-diligent-amateur note is important, which is why the second-person pronoun is so useful in this kind of writing. Vita's garden at Sissinghurst is the laboratory from which she dispenses advice to you, another eager gardener ready for the next experiment—say, that of making of a single-color garden, a white garden perhaps.

Katherine White, pouring over her garden catalogues as she readies for Spring in Maine and treating their authors with a respectful seriousness usually reserved for poets, wrote the *New Yorker* "reviews" that became *Onward and Upward in the Garden*, an enduring classic of singular charm. Hers is the voice one might employ, like Pliny, in letters to a likeminded friend one hopes will come for a visit. Eleanor Pérenyi's 1981 *Green Thoughts: A Writer in the Garden* has a simplistic organizational scheme, alphabetical, that belies the author's lightly worn erudition and tart, opinionated, elegant prose style. This was the book that set the essayist Michael Pollan, author of *Second Nature* and *The Botany of Desire*, both gem-quality examples of the genre, on his course of editor-turned-garden writer.

Although a 2002 edition of the Czech writer Karel Čapek's *The Gardener's Year*, first published in 1929, is included in the excellent Modern Library Gardening series that Pollan oversees, Claridge Press has brought out a 2003 edition with a new translation by Geoffrey Newsome. Čapek (pronounced Chupek) was a Czech nationalist of growing international stature during the brief twenty-year span when his country existed as an independent nation free of Hapsburg control and before the Munich Pact destroyed its autonomy by delivering it to the Nazis. An important figure and voice in this exhilarating period—paralleled now by the cultural vitality of the post-Soviet Czech Republic—he wrote constantly, variously, and prodigiously in his several roles as journalist, playwright, novelist, essayist, and author of short stories and children's books. He also produced a fine travel book, *Letters from England*, which Newsome has also translated. It should not be surprising, therefore, that Čapek should write on gardening, a personal avocation that he pursued with passion and knowledge.

Originally published as a regular column

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in the newspaper *Lidové noviny*, *The Gardener's Year* is a series of humorous vignettes flavored with real horticultural know-how, organized in traditional calendrical fashion. The forgivably sexist persona that Čapek has created in *The Gardener's Year* is a male garden advisor warning of the unremitting battle you will have with nature in your attempt to create your own little paradise. A great deal of this amusingly delivered expertise is focused—appropriately in light of his preoccupation with national identity—on the character and quality of good soil and the difficulty of achieving it.

> You should have a garden the size of a postage stamp; you should have at least one small flowerbed to see, dear boy, that not even clouds are as varied, beautiful and dreadful as the soil beneath your feet. You would be able to recognize soil which is acid, viscid, clayey, clod, stony, and nasty; you would be able to distinguish topsoil as airy as gingerbread, as warm, light and good as bread, and you would say that it was beautiful, as you now say about women or clouds. You would feel a particular, sensual pleasure as you drove your stick a yard into the crumbly, friable soil or as you crushed a clod in your fist to sample its airy, moist warmth.

In the new edition, Newsome has skillfully rendered the comical, earthy irony of Čapek's picture of confident cosmopolitan man as obsessive, incessantly frustrated gardener. Grumbling about the capriciousness of the weather, the bane of all gardeners—high winds, too hard a frost, too little rain, too much dry summer heat—is a leitmotif throughout the book. In the chapter on January, for instance, Čapek asserts:

> The worst time for the gardener is when black frost set in. Then the earth stiffens and dries to the bone, deeper day by day and night after night. The gardener thinks of the roots which are freezing in the soil, dead and hard like stone, of twigs benumbed to the pith by the dry, icy wind, and of freezing buds which the plant packed all its goods and chattels into in the autumn. If I thought it would help, I would dress my Holly in my own coat and put the Juniper in my own trousers. For you, Pontic Azalea, I would take off my shirt. You, Alum Root, I would cover with a hat. And for you, Tickseed, there is nothing left but my socks; you can make do with those.

A wry cartoon of the clothed plants by Čapek's older brother Josef, a talented painter and set designer, accompanies this lament against the harshness of winter. Other similarly charming drawings by Josef, which perfectly complement the comedic tone of Karel's prose, are sprinkled throughout the book.

Josef shared his brother's unease concerning the impending national disaster posed by the turn of political events in the late 1930s, and for his caricatures of Hitler he paid with his life in a Nazi concentration camp. Deeply dispirited over his beloved country's crushing fate, Karel, whose health was precarious in any case, had died seven years earlier, in 1938. But his legacy is an enduring one. Besides *R.U.R.* and *The Makropulos Affair*, plays for which he is justly famous, his seemingly slight but profound book on gardening is a metaphor for innate human optimism in the face of implacable reality. It is not about the garden as nature perfected but rather its opposite: the act of gardening as one of hopeful love and eternal becoming, for as he concludes:

> We gardeners live somewhat for the future; if our Roses bloom, we think how much better they will bloom the following year; and in ten years or so this little Spruce will have grown into a tree—if only those ten years were behind me! I would like to see what these Birch trees will be like in fifty years' time. The true, the best is ahead of us. Each successive year will add growth and beauty. Thank God that we will soon be another year on!

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Notebook

Homer & the power of men that have chests

by Christopher B. Nelson

One of the many things I love about St. John's College is that everyone must begin with Homer—and not only Homer, but the *Iliad*. It's not just that this happens to have been my favorite book for most of my life.

Homer is arguably both the first and the best of poets. In "Of the Most Outstanding Men," Montaigne wrote this about Homer:

> It was against the order of nature that he created the most excellent production that can be. For things at birth are ordinarily imperfect; they gain size and strength as they grow. He made the infancy of poetry and of several sciences mature, perfect and accomplished. For this reason he may be called the first and last of poets.

There is also something glorious about undertaking your studies at this particular beginning, because the *Iliad* takes hold of the imagination from its first line, when it sweeps the reader into the Achaean camps, to face the towering figure of Achilles: "Rage—Goddess, sing the rage of Peleus' son Achilles, murderous, doomed, that cost the Achaeans countless losses." The images and the pace of the poetry appear to be artless, yet they are commanding.

The *Iliad* has a kind of immediacy you will find nowhere else. It has irresistible momentum. It grabs you in the middle, somewhere in the vicinity of the chest or the heart, and it demands the attention of your sensibility.

Consider the size of the heroes and the size of the themes. Who is this godlike Achilles and what is his glory? What is the rage that has power over him? Where does it come from? What are the consequences of unleashing it upon others? Is it purely a destructive force? Can it be directed or controlled? What does it take to dissolve this rage? Why are these men fighting? Who or what drove them to it? What is the price of defending illicit love? Can one ever exercise control over the forces of nature, change fate, or fight the gods?

Look at the great battle-armies. What propels these heroes to action, especially when they have knowledge of the risks, dangers and dreadful consequences of battle? What is courage? What good is honor, and what does it mean to die honorably? What is virtue and excellence of character, and can you find these in the poem?

Well, here is your chance to read about the bold and to talk about the question of character.

C. S. Lewis wrote a little book that perhaps you have read, *The Abolition of Man*, in which he argued that modern education (he was writing in 1955) was failing to help the young develop a sense of morality. In man, Lewis said,

This essay is adapted from Mr. Nelson's convocation address at St. John's College in Annapolis, Maryland, and Santa Fe, New Mexico, in August 2003.

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> the head rules the belly through the chest—the seat . . . of magnanimity, of emotions organized by trained habit into stable sentiments. The chest—magnanimity—sentiment—these are the indispensable liaison officers between cerebral man and visceral man. It may even be said that it is by this middle element that man is man: for by his intellect he is mere spirit and by his appetite mere animal.

What Lewis feared from modern education was that it would stamp out the spirited element in the young, causing the atrophy of magnanimity and sentiment. And all the while, we clamor for more drive, or more self-sacrifice: "[We] remove the organ and demand the function. We make men without chests and expect of them virtue and enterprise. We laugh at honor and are shocked to find traitors in our midst. We castrate and bid the geldings be fruitful."

C. S. Lewis may have had cause to complain, but you do not—not now. Surely there is not a more powerful book anywhere than the *Iliad* with which to examine the virtues and vices, the beauty and terrible power for good or ill, of men with chests. So the *Iliad*, and, later, the *Odyssey* form a good beginning to philosophy; they ask you to confront powerful aspects of your nature on your first day at the college—aspects that often function independently of your rational capacity. You are asked to face the spirited element within you and to wonder whether it can or should be shaped and tempered by your reason.

I've been referring to a "spirited" element within man. You'll be reading a lot about this in your freshman year, first in Homer, then in Herodotus and Sophocles, Plato and Aristotle. The Greek word is *θύμος*, *thumos*. It is variously used to mean the breath of life, the principle that animates life, the soul, the heart, the spirit, an attitude that inspires action, a capacity for vigor, courage, mettle, liveliness, indignation, anger, righteousness, or pride. It is a word used of men and women both; it is what moves individual men and women from thought to action. So, while the *Iliad* is a stage for the display and destruction of *θύμος* among warrior men, you will have ample opportunity during the years for recognizing its place in the breasts of women too. If you look hard, you may even find it used to describe Penelope in Homer's *Odyssey*.

Now back to the *Iliad*, where you are also asked to consider the power of community, the bonds of friendship, the call of duty toward one's own people, all abandoned by Achilles very early in the poem. Achilles becomes both a lesser, meaner man and a distant, godlike emblem because of this. He must learn to take responsibility for the awful consequences of his withdrawal from battle; he must suffer a terrible personal loss and rise up above himself before he can again stand beside his fellow Achaeans. He must also learn compassion before reentering the community of men.

Why is community important? What is friendship, and what does it require? Where does the sense of self belong in a community? These are the same questions you must ask when trying to learn the best way to live with others.

You will read about the power of civil discourse as battle plans are shaped and reshaped, about the path to wisdom through suffering and re-commitment, the power of human empathy, and the need for magnanimity and generosity in dealing with others. And always in the shadows are the fates, spinning and inevitably shortening the thread of life. We are, in the end, mortals and we must come to accept this fact. How do we do this? We all want to know. How does one come to terms with death when everything in our being screams with life and the will to live?

Who are the gods and what is our relation to them? What of honor, glory, mercy, forgiveness, and the possibility for heroism? What is the authority of law and custom, and how should we behave when this authority threatens the bonds of family? What do we make of Helen who strangely serves as a kind of prime mover in the whole drama, but also as an object of spoil?

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Name a theme in the realm of human activity that is not dealt with in the *Iliad* and you are likely to find it in the *Odyssey*. There, our hero learns what it means to trade the offer of immortality for the possibility of returning home, the need to face one's demons and overcome one's weaknesses before deserving the right to return, the importance of taking life's journey and facing its dangers and temptations in order to grow, the necessity for leaving home in order to discover the bedrock that was there all along. There, we find wisdom in survival, truth in lies, and strength in weakness. And always our hero's happiness is bound up with the need to search—to search at any price.

We meet the glorious Penelope, Odysseus' match in every sense. How well has she raised their son to manhood in his father's twenty-year absence? How has she maintained home, family and kingdom all on her own? How should she treat her returning husband and gain mastery over this wayward stranger of a man, to test his love and confirm that he is fit to return to his place beside her and his seat of power in Ithaca? It is in the *Odyssey* that we see the strength of Homer's women and goddesses who serve as Odysseus' protectors and saviors as well as his reason for returning—they become both the means and the end of his journey from the world of Troy to home in Ithaca.

Last, you get the experience of beauty in Homer's unforgettable images. I still wake up to dawn's rosy fingers stretching across the waters of the Chesapeake. I see the father's unbounded joy as he tosses his young boy about in his arms, kissing him lovingly, before heading back out to the field of honor for his final battle. I watch the wise and lovely Penelope at her loom, weaving the web that makes Odysseus's homecoming possible.

Consider now this new beginning to your education: you get the beautiful, the great, the first and the last; you get to start with the issues of the heart and the spirit, those things that move you to action. You will talk about honor and courage, beauty and glory, gods' laws and man's, mortality and death, community and friendship, family and love, and the inevitable longing for the next challenge, the search for an answer, the way to human happiness.

With these first two books, you are diving into the greatest project of your education, which is to consider how to compose your character, to figure out what is necessary to live life well—your life—the one you are building for yourselves. In other words, you are not being told to love or admire Achilles or Odysseus or Helen or Penelope—only to let them into your lives so that you may engage with them. Incidentally, it is another fine quality of these poems that Homer doesn't try to tell you what to think; he lets the story act upon you without intervention. You get to think for yourselves about what is fitting and what is not. But please listen to your classmates too; you might actually learn something from them. Our job, your tutors' job, is to listen and to ask; yours is to read the books and wrestle with the questions. You will experience no more liberating an activity than this, for a question is a door opening wide, inviting you to explore and discover what's inside. Trust yourselves to take advantage of this invitation; we do. We believe in the power of your rational capacity. We believe in your power to become your own teachers. Walk through this door, and you will soon find yourselves exercising those intellectual muscles that will allow you to transform a little of what you read here and something of what you hear there into a work that is all your own. We call this work "your judgment."

If you are now worried, however, that the classroom is the only place you may exercise the spirited element within you, have no fear. There are many other opportunities around this campus, among your friends or on your own, on the playing fields or upon the stage, in community activities or choral groups, in competing for glory or singing to the gods: *Sing, Goddess, the wrath of Achilles.*

May the poet inspire each and every one of you to love your learning with us and move you to shape a life that is worthy of living.

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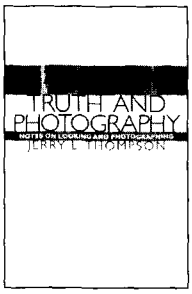

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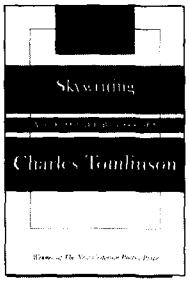

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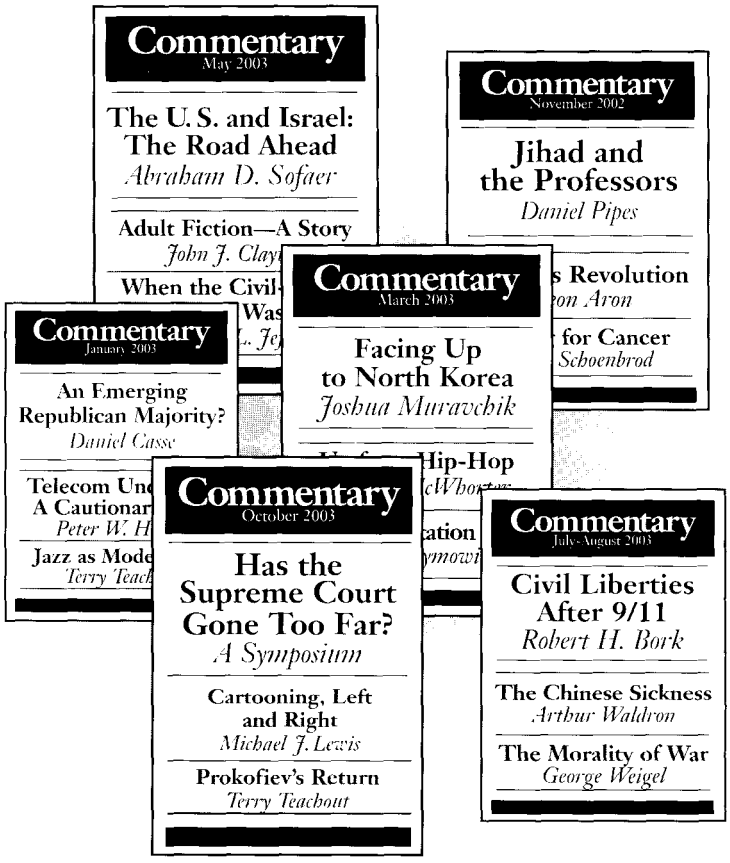

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